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KNOWING, BEING, AND INTERPRETATION IN THE LATER NIETZSCHE

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **KNOWING, BEING, AND INTERPRETATION IN THE LATER NIETZSCHE**

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This dissertation challenges the view, prevalent in the literature, that Nietzsche's later philosophy ultimately retains a Kantian distinction between the world as it is known (or as it appears) and the world as it really is. According to the neo-Kantian reading, Nietzsche's doctrine of "perspectivism" presupposes the existence of a pre-given world upon which there are perspectives, a noumenal world that the doctrines of "becoming" and "will to power" are taken to describe. It has often been remarked that this ontological conception is inconsistent with Nietzsche's perspectival epistemology, but that, nevertheless, Nietzsche seems to maintain these inconsistent views. In contrast, I provide a reading of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology that invalidates the charge of inconsistency and shows that he thoroughly repudiates the Kantian dualisms of appearance and reality, scheme and content. I argue that Nietzsche's language of "perspective" ought to be read within the broader and richer language of "interpretation" and show that interpretations, for Nietzsche, are not construals of some primary ontological ground, but rather reconstruals of interpretations already on hand. I suggest that becoming and will to power are not doctrines about what the world is really like, but claims about perspectival interpretation itself. Thus, the doctrine of becoming foregrounds the partiality and ever-shifting character of perspectives and interpretations, while the doctrine of will to power describes the constant struggle of interpretations and the ways in which some interpretations come to dominate.

The first chapter situates Nietzsche's remarks on truth within the context of a history of European thought conceived as a struggle between being, on the one hand, and becoming and appearing, on the other. Chapter 2 then offers a general characterization of the later Nietzsche's epistemological and ontological position, showing that it issues from a twin commitment to naturalism and to the primacy and irreducibility of interpretation. The third chapter argues against both metaphysical realist and common sense realist forms of the neo-Kantian view. The final chapter focuses on the doctrine of perspectivism and more fully develops my anti-dualist reading of Nietzsche's theories of knowing and being.

I would like to thank the many people who have supported me and my work in difficult times. In particular, I would like to thank my wife, Molly, whose love, encouragement, and critical (to say nothing of editorial) support have been instrumental in getting me to and the work through. Though our countless discussions and disagreements are now well beyond the call of duty, I owe no less to Molly than to anyone else.

I would also like to thank my family as well, particularly to Christa Cox, James Cox, and my mother, Dorothy Cox, without whose spiritual and material support this book could not have been written. Few academics are blessed with such a family, though it is not unusual and necessarily is matched by intellectual vitality. I must also thank my goddaughter Valarie, who, on the Christmas Eve before her wedding to Michael, so kindly presented the family with a passage from

the *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to my dissertation reader, Hayden White, whose demands for strict historical method have been a constant source of inspiration, and Burne Magnus, Nietzsche scholar extraordinary, who kindly gave us a copy of his own before we had one. I have also benefited from the help and support of my colleagues and scholars at UCSC, particularly Donna Haraway, Richard

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Deepest thanks are due to my family as well, particularly to Christa Cox, James Cox, Stan Grabarek, and Lara Cox, without whose spiritual and material support this dissertation, and so much else, would not have been possible. Few academics are blessed with such a family, in which warmth and generosity is matched by intellectual vitality. I dedicate this dissertation to my older sister Valerie, who, on the Christmas Eve before her death, introduced me to Nietzsche by boldly presenting the family with a passage from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

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What, Nietzsche argues, follow from "God's Death"? namely, the religious, the political, and the aesthetic ramifications of this "event," its role in the formation of the "values of life," and eternal recurrence? Little has been said about another set of ramifications, the ramifications for epistemology and ontology, the way in which "God's death" leads to the formulation of Nietzsche's epistemological theory of "becoming" and the corresponding ontological theories of becoming and will to power. Although I will not argue from this second set of ramiifications, these ideas are at least as important as the first, and help those that I explore in what follows.

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Deleuze (1986), Derrida (1981), Moles (1961, 1969), Heidegger (1962), Kuhn (1970), Gadamer (1975, 1977), Schacht (1983, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> In his most recent statement (1990), "Nietzsche's Eternal Recurrence is a thought experiment," a thought experiment of which stands the death of God, in his reading, "absurd." The "absurd" here refers to the self-explanatory sense of ridiculous or absurd—absurdity. (Emphasis in the original.)

## INTRODUCTION

**0.1 Aim and Argument**

"Nietzsche's actual thought is a thought-system, at the beginning of which stands the *death of God*." So wrote Karl Löwith over a half-century ago (1941, 193). This conception of the underlying systematicity of Nietzsche's aphoristic and fragmentary philosophy and its appeal to the event of "God's death" has gained considerable currency since the Nietzsche-revival of the late 1930's. It figures prominently in some of the most influential accounts of Nietzsche's philosophy to appear during the past few decades.<sup>1</sup> According to these accounts, Nietzsche's later thought is to be understood as starting from the premise of "the death of God" and proceeding to work out its consequences in every area of philosophical inquiry.

Yet these scholars have primarily concerned themselves with only a particular set of the consequences that, Nietzsche alleges, follow from "God's death": namely, the religious, moral, and existential ramifications of this "event," its role in the formulation of the notions of nihilism, *Übermensch*, and eternal recurrence.<sup>2</sup> Little has been said about another set of consequences: namely, the ramifications for epistemology and ontology, the way in which the "death of God" leads to the formulation of Nietzsche's epistemological theory of perspectivism and the complimentary ontological theories of becoming and will to power. While not entirely separate from the former set of concerns, these latter are at least as important for Nietzsche; and it is these that I explore in what follows.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Jaspers (1935, 242ff, 429ff), Morgan (1941, 36ff), Heidegger (1943), Kaufmann (1950, 72ff, 96ff), Magnus (1978, 6ff), Schacht (1983, 119ff).

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Löwith's complete statement reads: "Nietzsche's actual thought is a thought-system, at the beginning of which stands the *death of God*, in its midst the ensuing *nihilism*, and at its end the self-surmounting of nihilism in *eternal recurrence*" (emphasis in the original German).

interpretation: first, a skeptical variant, which reads the doctrine of perspectivism as an evolutionary version of Kant's transcendental epistemology and the doctrines of becoming and will to power as Heraclitean versions of Kant's "thing in itself"; and second, a (putatively) anti-skeptical variant, which argues that, while Nietzsche rejects the notion of the "thing in itself," he nevertheless maintains the existence of an extra-perspectival world, which it is the goal of epistemological perspectives to "get right." I show that both of these "neo-Kantian" readings commit Nietzsche to the ideals of a God's-eye view and a pre-given world, which—along with the very distinction between appearance and reality—he expressly repudiates.

The fourth and final chapter provides a reading of the Nietzsche's perspectivism that shows it to follow from his naturalism and interpretive holism. I argue that the optical metaphor is misleading and that Nietzsche's language of "perspective" ought to be seen to function within the broader and richer language of "interpretation." I show that Nietzsche vastly extends the notion of interpretation such that all entities become at once interpreted and interpreting entities, and that nothing exists outside this web of interpretation. The chapter and dissertation conclude by suggesting how this interpreting-interpreted world is also one of becoming and will to power.

## 0.2 Textual Scope and Methodology

It has become customary, in works on Nietzsche, to make explicit and to justify one's methodological decisions regarding two basic textual issues: the issue of periodization, and the issue of use of the *Nachlaß*. Concerning the former, I generally restrict myself to the later texts, by which I mean the texts from *The Gay Science* onward.<sup>3</sup> I do so for several

<sup>3</sup> *The Gay Science* is often considered a "middle period" work, though, for the reasons given below, I think it can be considered the entry-way into the "later" Nietzsche, a strategy also used by Schacht (1983, xiii). Moreover, I make greatest use of the material in Book V, added in 1887, just after the publication of *Beyond Good and Evil* and shortly before the

reasons. Most importantly, it is in *The Gay Science* that Nietzsche first proclaims "the death of God" and begins a concerted inquiry into issues of truth, knowledge, and being that results in the doctrines of perspectivism, becoming, and will to power. This is not to say that Nietzsche is unconcerned with these issues in earlier works, nor that his position on these issues is markedly different in those works. One can find, in the earlier texts (particularly in "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," *Human, All Too Human*, and *Daybreak*), many statements, arguments, and analyses pertaining to epistemological and ontological topics that do not substantially differ from those found in the later texts. In light of this, I sometimes cite these texts in support of particular arguments, though usually within the context of the *development* of Nietzsche's views.

This brings up a second reason why I choose to concentrate on the later texts. While I think there are problems with the standard tripartite periodization of Nietzsche's corpus—a schema first proposed by Vaihinger (1902, 44ff) and prevalent ever since—and with the more elaborate periodization of Nietzsche's epistemological and ontological writings recently proposed by Clark (1990, chap. 4), substantiation of this claim would require a separate study. To avoid opening this Pandora's box, I opt for what seems to me to be a fairly uncontroversial restriction to the texts beginning with *The Gay Science*, which provide sufficient material for the development and elaboration of my interpretation.

With regard to these later works, however, I make only infrequent use of Nietzsche's long prose-poem, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It is not that this text has nothing to add to the issues that concern me, but rather that the profusion of voices and narrative situations one finds in that text make it especially difficult to quote and explicate in the sort of essay I present here. Moreover, it seems to me that the philosophical themes taken up in

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publication of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, both of which are generally regarded as "later" works.

*Zarathustra* are presented elsewhere in a style more conducive to the kind of analysis I engage in throughout the dissertation.

An explanation is also in order concerning my use of the *Nachlaß*, and especially *The Will to Power*. It can no longer be supposed that the set of notes collected by Nietzsche's sister under the title *The Will to Power* represents what Heidegger called "the preliminary drafts and fragmentary elaborations" of "Nietzsche's chief philosophical work," "his planned *magnum opus*" (1936–37, 3, 7).<sup>4</sup> This view has been effectively discredited, largely due to the efforts of Walter Kaufmann (1950, 6–9, passim; 1967) and Bernd Magnus (1986, 85–93), who have shown that neither the selection nor the arrangement of the notes that appear as *The Will to Power* is Nietzsche's own.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, both scholars have shown that, before writing his final books, Nietzsche had even abandoned the project of writing a book to be called *The Will to Power* (Kaufmann 1950, 7; Magnus 1986, 85).

In light of this situation, one might well ask how anyone could justify use of *The Will to Power*. "Splitters"—those commentators who, according to Magnus, "distinguish sharply between the published<sup>6</sup> and unpublished writings" (82–83)—will likely consider any such use suspect. And yet some of the most influential and respected accounts of Nietzsche have been offered by "lumpers"—those "who regard the use of Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* as unproblematic": namely, such commentators as Jaspers, Heidegger,<sup>7</sup> Kaufmann, Deleuze, Danto, Müller-Lauter, Schacht, and Nehamas (82). These latter have provided a variety of

<sup>4</sup> In all fairness, however, it should be recalled that Heidegger himself expressed some reservations about the status of "Nietzsche's so-called major work." See Heidegger (1939, §2).

<sup>5</sup> This view was earlier advocated by Karl Schlechta, who, in his 1954–56 edition of Nietzsche's works, scrambled *The Will to Power* into a series of notes arranged neither thematically nor chronologically.

<sup>6</sup> These are generally taken to include those texts which were completed, though not published before Nietzsche's collapse, namely, *The Antichrist*, *Ecce Homo*, and *Nietzsche contra Wagner*.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Schrift has rightly suggested that, according to this scheme, Heidegger ought to be considered an "inverse splitter," since "he, too, separates sharply between published and unpublished writings, but he gives priority to the *unpublished* writings" (1990, 16).

reasons for continuing to make use of *The Will to Power*. Despite his reservations, Kaufmann decided to publish an English translation of that text, arguing that it allows us “to look, as it were, into the workshop of a great thinker” (1967, xvi), and that it presents some of Nietzsche’s most sustained treatments of, among other things, epistemological issues (xiv–xv; 1950, 204–5).<sup>8</sup> In similar fashion, Schacht justifies his heavy reliance on *The Will to Power* by stating that the “unpublished writings [...] contain much more of [Nietzsche’s] expressed thinking on certain important matters than do his finished works” and that *The Will to Power* is “sufficiently representative” of this unpublished material (1983, xii). Jaspers contends that Nietzsche’s posthumous notes are legitimate sources, since “none of Nietzsche’s forms of communication has a privileged character,” and since “Nietzsche himself is intelligible only when we gather everything together” (1936, 5). And, according to Nehamas, *The Will to Power* “has become, for better or worse, an integral part of Nietzsche’s literary and philosophical work, and it has been instrumental in forming our reactions to him over the past eighty years” (1985, 9).

All these justifications seem to me to be somewhat compelling. Nietzsche did not gather together the particular notes that appear in *The Will to Power*, and did indeed abandon the project of writing such a book; but this does not mean that he rejected all or even most of the insights presented in these notes, or that he might not have made use of them in future projects. Yet the corrupt status of *The Will to Power* must still be held firmly in mind. For this reason, I maintain something of a middle course, attempting to be what might be called a “responsible lumper.” I, too, consider *The Will to Power* a valuable source of information about Nietzsche’s thought, particularly on matters of epistemology and ontology. Yet I try to use it only as a supplement to the published works. That is, I make use of only those sections which seem to me to add to, and not conflict with, what is

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<sup>8</sup> Though generally a “splitter,” R.J. Hollingdale (1973, 131), co-translator of *The Will to Power*, concurs on this point.

presented in the published texts. The nature of Nietzsche's later notes—their succinctness and their often plain, philosophical style—is conducive to quotation. Yet where I quote them, I try to note passages in the published work that, I think, corroborate the views presented in the quoted text.<sup>9</sup> Such use of *The Will to Power* and the *Nachlaß* generally, it seems to me, is reasonable and defensible.

### 0.3 Interpretive Methodology

In this dissertation, Nietzsche's thought is considered against the background of recent Anglo-American and European philosophy. Of course, this is not the only way to read Nietzsche. Walter Kaufmann, George Stack, and Claudia Crawford, for instance, have shown that much can be revealed through historical investigations that place Nietzsche's philosophy within the intellectual and cultural *milieu* of the late nineteenth-century.<sup>10</sup> And surely Nietzsche's texts lend themselves to non-philosophical readings as well. However, my interest in Nietzsche has to do with his importance vis-à-vis developments in European and Anglo-American philosophy since the 1960's, particularly French poststructuralism and what has been called "post-analytic" American philosophy.<sup>11</sup> Poststructuralism's debt to Nietzsche is explicit and well known.<sup>12</sup> And, though his work seems to have had little direct influence on "post-analytic" philosophy, several commentators have recently noted the many similarities between Nietzsche's positions (particularly on matters of

<sup>9</sup> A similar methodological position is advocated by Warren (1988, xiii–xiv).

<sup>10</sup> See Kaufmann (1950), Stack (1983) and (1991), and Crawford (1988).

<sup>11</sup> See Rajchman (1985) and West (1981). Under this label, Rajchman and West include Thomas Kuhn, Wilfred Sellars, W.V. Quine, Nelson Goodman, Richard Rorty, Donald Davidson, Hilary Putnam, and others.

<sup>12</sup> Gilles Deleuze's 1962 book, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, is widely considered the inaugural text of poststructuralism, marking a turn away from Hegel, the dialectic, and the system toward Nietzsche, difference, and the fragment. In the following two decades, there appeared books and articles on Nietzsche by most of the major poststructuralist thinkers: Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Sarah Kofman, Maurice Blanchot, Pierre Klossowski, and Luce Irigaray, to name a few.

epistemology and ontology) and those of such philosophers as W.V. Quine, Nelson Goodman, Hilary Putnam, and Donald Davidson.<sup>13</sup> Whether or not sustained comparisons can be made between Nietzsche's work and that of these more recent philosophers, it is increasingly evident that Nietzsche's work has something to add to contemporary philosophical debates; and it is in this spirit that this dissertation is offered.

The view of Nietzsche I present, then, is informed by the concerns of recent Continental and Anglo-American philosophy generally, and, more specifically, by the host of works on Nietzsche that have appeared over the past three decades in Europe and America.<sup>14</sup> I initially came to Nietzsche through the work of such Continental philosophers as Martin Heidegger, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault; and I continue to be influenced by those readings. However, in this dissertation, I most fully engage Anglo-American or "analytic" readings of Nietzsche; and this for two main reasons. First, the analytic approach has the benefit of translating Nietzsche's complex idiom into more conventional philosophical prose that helps to sort out Nietzsche's critiques of, and contributions to, the philosophical tradition. As Bernd Magnus has rightly noted, such "'analytical' renderings of Nietzsche," though certainly not exhaustive or final, "are the rungs without which we cannot reach the top of the ladder," indeed "without [which] we cannot even get started up the ladder" (1983b, 658). Second, analytic interpretations have recently had much to say about Nietzsche's conceptions of truth, knowledge, and being.<sup>15</sup> Many of these interpretations, it seems to me, have gotten Nietzsche wrong; and they therefore serve as convenient foils to my own reading. Thus, from within the language and

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., West (1981), Magnus (1983b, 656) and (1989, 304), Nehamas (1983, 483ff) and (1985, 95), Rorty (1986-87, chap. 1 and *passim*), (1991a) and (1991b), Schrift (1990, 219, 223), Stack (1992, 88ff), and Nussbaum (1991, 110).

<sup>14</sup> A recent bibliographic study by Earl Nitschke (1992) reveals that the number per year of English-language books, articles, dissertations, and papers on Nietzsche has grown steadily from 15, in 1960, to 150, in 1988. A similar increase could likely be documented in the French-, German-, and Italian-language literature on Nietzsche.

<sup>15</sup> See the notes in Chapter 1, section 1.5.

literature of “the analytic Nietzsche,” this dissertation ends up with a reading of Nietzsche that has many resonances with recent Continental theories of interpretation and text, subject and object.

In particular, I present a view of Nietzsche’s later epistemology and ontology that rejects the understanding of Nietzsche as positing something ontologically primary (“the world,” “the text,” “becoming,” “chaos,” “will to power”), which is then interpreted or perspectively construed by a knowing subject. One finds this “metaphysical realist” (what I call “neo-Kantian”) view throughout the literature on Nietzsche. Indeed, I argue in Chapter 3 that this view is ultimately affirmed even in many texts that claim to reject it. Instead, I propose a rigorously anti-dualist reading of Nietzsche according to which, as Michel Foucault has put it, “[t]here is nothing absolutely primary to interpret, because at bottom everything is already interpretation. [...] There is never, if you will, an *interpretandum* which is not already an *interpretans*” (1964, 64).<sup>16</sup> On this view, interpretations or perspectives are conceived not as the property of subjects for the construal of an external realm of objects, but as public systems of belief, meaning, and value that internally individuate and specify positions for both subjects and objects.

For a variety of reasons, my claim to be dealing with Nietzsche’s “epistemology” and “ontology” may seem odd. Such rubrics will likely seem foreign to Nietzsche, who, unlike his predecessors, Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, is not a systematic philosopher who begins from a theory of knowledge and proceeds to work out an ethics, an aesthetics, etc. In Nietzsche’s work, questions of knowing and being are not dissociated from questions of morality, art, politics, culture, history, etc.; and Nietzsche does not seem interested in working out “a theory of knowledge,” “a theory of being,” “a theory of the good,” “a

<sup>16</sup> This, too, I would argue, is the meaning of Derrida’s notorious phrase, “*there is nothing outside of the text*” (1967, 158), where “the text” no longer means “the book” but the web of meaning and being generally. Cf. Nietzsche’s “*there is nothing besides the whole*” (“es giebt Nichts ausser dem Ganzen!”) (TI VI 8).

theory of art," or any other such theory. Moreover, the term *Erkenntnistheorie* is rare and the term *Ontologie* almost nonexistent in Nietzsche's texts; and, where these terms do appear, they mark a contrast with Nietzsche's own approach.<sup>17</sup> Lastly, such terms have fallen out of favor in contemporary philosophy. Ontology is commonly associated with a metaphysics that sets out to determine the nature of being as a whole or the ultimate constituents of the universe; and epistemology is associated with foundationalist theories of knowledge that have increasingly come under attack.<sup>18</sup> If Nietzsche is the anti-metaphysical, holistic philosopher I maintain he is, one might well wonder why I would want to saddle him with these labels.

Yet I think there are good reasons for continuing to use these terms, even in the present context. First, issues of truth and knowledge, being and becoming occupied Nietzsche throughout his career and are among his central concerns.<sup>19</sup> Though they are indeed bound up with questions of morality, art, culture, politics, and history, Nietzsche nonetheless has distinctive conceptions of knowing and being. If he himself did not thoroughly work these out, this does not mean that one is wrong to attempt to do so. Indeed, given the acknowledged relevance to contemporary debates of Nietzsche's remarks on these issues, it seems even more worthwhile to undertake such a project. Lastly, I think that it is unnecessary to restrict the terms "epistemology" and "ontology" to a foundationalist or metaphysical usage. Nietzsche certainly has a "theory of knowledge" and a "theory of being" in the loose sense of these terms, and that is all that I want to designate with the

<sup>17</sup> The only instance of the term "*Ontologie*" occurs in PTG, 11, where Nietzsche discusses Parmenides' concern with "the coldest emptiest concept of all, the concept of being"; the enterprise of "*Erkenntnistheorie*," which Nietzsche always associates with Kant, is disparaged in GS 354, BGE 204, TI III 3, WP 95, 101, 253, 410, 442, 462, 591, 668.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Rorty has perhaps done the most, in recent years, to reject the enterprise of "epistemology," which, he argues, should be replaced by a holistic, hermeneutical approach to questions of knowledge. See, e.g., Rorty (1979, 315–94).

<sup>19</sup> Daniel Breazeale makes a similar point: "to say that Nietzsche was not primarily interested in epistemology, is not to say that epistemological matters are not of central *importance* to his entire philosophy" (1971, 235).

terms “epistemology” and “ontology,” which are certainly less awkward and more convenient than other terms.

I should say, however, that my claim to be dealing with Nietzsche’s “ontology” is somewhat misleading. In fact, I deal with Nietzsche’s “ontology” only to the degree that it relates to his “epistemology,” that is, his theory of perspective and interpretation. For, on my account, Nietzsche rejects the notion of an absolute ontology and instead construes questions of being as relative to particular perspectives and interpretations. Thus, I do not discuss his ontological notions of “becoming,” “chaos,” and “will to power” in their own right but only as they are implied in the doctrine of perspectivism.

#### 0.4 Directions for Further Research

I have not, then, exhausted the field opened up by this dissertation. Further work might include a historical discussion of the genesis of the “neo-Kantian” interpretation of Nietzsche’s later epistemology and ontology. Such a discussion would examine the way in which Nietzsche’s early advocacy of a Schopenhauerian Kantianism has led critics to believe that a residual Kantianism lingers in his later work, despite his repudiation of such notions as “the thing in itself” and his later claim that, in the early works, he “tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant’s and Schopenhauer’s spirit and taste!” (BT/SC 6). It would also further problematize the textual evidence marshalled in favor of the view that Nietzsche sanctions F.A. Lange’s evolutionary neo-Kantianism.

Further work might also include more sustained treatment of the later ontological doctrines, particularly “becoming,” “chaos,” and “will to power.” Against the view that these designate, for Nietzsche, what the world is “in itself,” interpretations of these doctrines might be offered that show them to be thoroughly consistent with Nietzsche’s

commitments to both naturalism and interpretive holism. Conceived as describing what Terence Irwin calls "self-change"—"constant local movement and qualitative alteration" (1977, 4)—becoming would be seen as a naturalistic doctrine that counters the philosophical preoccupation with "being," "stasis," and "eternity," by foregrounding the empirical inevitability of change in the universe. Conceived as also describing what Irwin calls "aspect-change"—"the presence of opposite properties in different situations" (4)—becoming would be seen as a doctrine about the incessant shift of perspectives and interpretations within a universe that has no essential character. Similarly, Nietzsche's notion of chaos would be glossed both as a claim concerning the absence of absolute origin and aim in a Godless universe, and as a claim concerning the perpetual struggle of interpretations and the irreducibility of the world to any single description. Finally, will to power would be read both as a way of construing all natural beings as differing from one another in degree but not in kind, and as a way of accounting for (natural, social, historical, conceptual, etc.) change that rejects the residual theology Nietzsche finds in such notions as "cause," "will," "necessity," "equilibrium," and "entropy."

...what Nietzsche takes to be the qualitative cosmological consequences of "the death of God." Yet before we turn to this task, we must first come to an understanding of what it means, for Nietzsche, to say "God is dead."

The first explicit statement of "the death of God" first appears in 1882, in Book Three of *The Gay Science*, and in the following few years it finds its way into several passages of *This Speaks of That* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. But it is not until 1887, with the appearance of Book Five of *The Gay Science*, that the language of "disciple" and the "Apostle" from this period, I think Nietzsche

<sup>1</sup> In 1882, for example, Book 3, entitled "Elucidation Nihilismus," which collects all of the surviving fragments of the original edition dates from late 1886-1887. Indeed, Nietzsche refers to these fragments in *GS* 10, 27, where, discussing the "death of God" as "the greatest and deepest self-overcoming," he announces a "new project that must now bring us into existence more courageously and severely"; and (under the title "On the Mystery of the Gods") in *GS* 11, 2.

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the full significance of the madman's cry: "God is dead... God remains dead." —Nietzsche, "The Madman" (GM I 25).

In Volume 5 (1887), where again Book Five of that year, we find out what Nietzsche's

## BEING, BECOMING, AND APPEARING: NIETZSCHE'S GENEALOGY OF EUROPEAN THOUGHT

*We know the way, we have found the exit out of the labyrinth of thousands of years.*

—Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* §1

### 1.1 The "Death of God" as the Turning-Point of European Thought

Even those only casually acquainted with Nietzsche know him to have declared that "God is dead." Yet, as Nietzsche often reminds us, common knowledge has the tendency to turn such declarations into slogans that reduce their impact and conceal the complex conditions of their utterance. This is certainly the case with Nietzsche's famous pronouncement. This pronouncement is the entry-way into Nietzsche's later philosophy and much is said to follow from it. My task will be to examine what Nietzsche takes to be the epistemological and ontological consequences of "the death of God." Yet before we can proceed to this task, we must first come to an understanding of what it means, for Nietzsche, that "God is dead."

The notion of "the death of God" first appears in 1882, in Book Three of *The Gay Science*. In the following few years, it finds its way into several passages of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. But it is not until 1887, with the appearance of Book Five of *The Gay Science*, the *Genealogy of Morals*, and the *Nachlaß* from this period,<sup>1</sup> that Nietzsche

<sup>1</sup> Primarily in *The Will to Power*, Book I, entitled "European Nihilism," which collects together notes that the Colli-Montinari edition dates from late 1886-1887. Indeed, Nietzsche himself connects these passages in GM III 27, where, discussing the "death of God" as "Europe's longest and bravest self-overcoming," he announces a future project that "shall probe these things more thoroughly and severely [...] (under the title "On the History of

makes clear the full significance of the madman's cry: "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him" (GS 125).

In *Gay Science* §343, which opens Books Five of that text, we find out that Nietzsche's announcement of the "death of God" is not at all a personal confession of atheism or loss of faith; nor is it so for the various characters who make this proclamation (the madman, Zarathustra, the last pope, the ugliest man, etc).<sup>2</sup> Rather, it becomes evident that, for Nietzsche, the "death of God" is a *cultural and historical event* ("a generally European event," he calls it in §357). Thus the passage begins: "The greatest recent event—that 'God is dead,' that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable—is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe."

Furthermore, it also becomes clear that this event concerns far more than theology and religion; that it is an *intellectual* event, a crucial moment in the history of European thinking in general. Thus, reiterating the madman's conclusion, Nietzsche goes on to write:

The event is far too great, too distant, too remote from the multitude's capacity for comprehension even for the tidings of it to be thought of as having *arrived* as yet. Much less may one suppose that many people know as yet *what* this event really means—and how much must collapse now that this faith has been undermined because it was built upon this faith, propped up by it, grown into it; for example, the whole of our European morality. This long plenitude and sequence of breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm that is now impending—who could guess enough of it today to be compelled to play the teacher and advance proclaimer of this monstrous logic of terror, the prophet of a gloom and an eclipse of the sun whose like has probably never yet occurred on earth?

Here, we get an inkling of what Nietzsche will later make clear: that "the death of God" involves nothing less than a dismantling of the basic structures of belief and value upon which Western thought has been founded. Moreover, we soon learn that this event is not

European Nihilism" [...] contained in a work in progress: *The Will To Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values*).

<sup>2</sup> This has been stressed by a number of Nietzsche's commentators: see, e.g., Jaspers (1935, 242), Heidegger (1943, 57ff), Morgan (1941, 37ff), Kaufmann (1950, 99ff), and Blanchot (1969, 144-46).

brought about from the outside, by some external cataclysm; nor is it some chance occurrence. Rather, the “monstrous logic of terror” set in motion by “the death of God” is brought about from the inside, through a critique necessitated by the very presuppositions of Western thought. In short, for Nietzsche, the “death of God” marks the beginning of a *self-overcoming* of the foundational structures of European thought.

These themes are more thoroughly elaborated in §357 of *The Gay Science*, where Nietzsche writes:

[T]he decline of the faith in the Christian god, the triumph of scientific atheism, is a generally European event in which all races had their share and for which all deserve credit and honor. [...] Unconditional and honest atheism [...] is a triumph achieved finally and with great difficulty by the European conscience, being the most fateful act of two thousand years of discipline for truth that in the end forbids itself the *lie* in faith in God ... You see what has really triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously, the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at every price. Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and governance of a god; interpreting history in honor of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes; interpreting one's own experiences as pious people have long enough interpreted theirs, as if everything were providential, a hint, designed and ordained for the sake of the salvation of the soul: that is all over now, that has man's conscience against it, that is considered by every more refined conscience to be indecent, dishonest, mendacious, feminism, weakness, and cowardice. In this severity, if anywhere, we are good Europeans and heirs of Europe's longest and most courageous self-overcoming [*Selbstüberwindung*].

After quoting this passage in the penultimate section of the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche continues:

All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming [*Selbstaufhebung*]: thus the law of life will have it, the law of the necessity of “self-overcoming” [»*Selbstüberwindung*«] in the nature of life—the lawgiver himself eventually receives the call: “*patere legem, quam ipse tulisti*” [submit to the law you yourself proposed]. In this way Christianity as a dogma was destroyed by its own morality; in the same way Christianity as morality must now perish too: we stand on the threshold of this event. After Christian truthfulness has drawn one inference after another, it must end by drawing its most striking inference, its inference against itself; this will happen, however, when it poses the question, “what is the meaning of all will to truth?” ... And here I again touch on my

problem, on our problem [...]: what meaning would our whole being possess if it were not this, that in us the will to truth becomes conscious of itself as a *problem*? ... As the will to truth thus gains self-consciousness, from now on —there is no doubt about it—morality will go to ruin [*geht ... zu Gründe*]: this is the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next two centuries in Europe—the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps also the most hopeful of spectacles ... (GM III 27).

Taken together, these passages present a genealogy that is extremely important for understanding Nietzsche's later thought. Here, he attempts to explain both the sequence of events leading to “the death of God” and its inevitable consequences. Yet this account is highly condensed and not easily grasped. Fortunately, these passages do not stand alone. On the contrary, they form part of a network of texts, written in 1887 and constantly cross-referenced by Nietzsche. Following the various strands of this network, we come to see that it presents a genealogy which links “God” and “morality” with “truth” and argues that a “refinement” of the “European conscience” eventually leads to the “self-overcoming” of metaphysics, theology, morality, and science, and to a “revaluation” of “truth.”

## 1.2 From Metaphysics and Theology to Science

Somewhat like Hegel's “phenomenology of spirit,” but with a rather different trajectory, Nietzsche's genealogy is concerned with the quasi-historical movement of Western thought. Anticipating Heidegger and Derrida, Nietzsche considers all of Western thought, from Plato through positivism, to form a single epoch, the closure of which is now at hand. This epoch is characterized by the accordance of an absolute value to “truth” conceived of as the determination of “being” apart from all “becoming” and “seeming” or “appearing.”<sup>3</sup> Since the history of this epoch is a history of self-overcoming, this self-overcoming will have something to do with truth—more specifically, with a contradictory development of the concept of truth.

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., BGE Preface, 2, 34; GM III 24; TI III and IV.

Since its inception, Western thought has attempted rigorously to distinguish "what is" from "what merely seems or appears to be," "what is not yet," and "what is no longer." Yet the early Greek thinkers noted that, within the physical world in which we have bodily existence and sensuous experience, we nowhere encounter this "truth as being." On the contrary, as physical, embodied creatures, we are continually confronted with an ever-changing stream of sensory experience in which things incessantly appear and disappear. This experience incessantly embroils us in deceptions, for what the eye sees the hand often does not feel, and what the eye sees from one point of view it sees differently from another. Furthermore, everything within this world, including our own bodies, exists only for a relative duration, within which every thing undergoes constant local movement and qualitative change. And within this world, each thing owes its existence to other things and to a sequence of events that seems to stretch into an infinite past. In short, the world of which we are a part seems to be, in its entirety, a domain of temporal, spatial, contingent, and conditional particulars. If truth is being, it is not to be found within this domain. Convined of the existence of truth and knowledge, the founders of the Western tradition thus resolved that truth resides in another, meta-physical world, an eternal world of necessary, unconditioned, universal, and absolute being: for the Platonist, the world of the Forms; for the Christian, the kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup>

Yet Nietzsche remarks that the Platonic-Christian notion of truth subtly changes with the institutionalization of religion. With "the father confessor's refinement of the Christian conscience" (GS 357), truth comes to be formulated as the commandment not to lie, to tell the truth no matter how terrible and regardless of consequence. As such, truth is partially dislodged from its other-worldly residence. No longer strictly defined by the belief in and search for a "true world of being," the will to truth becomes the demand to tell the truth—to

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<sup>4</sup> Note that Nietzsche considers Platonism and Christianity, in essential respects, the same, claiming that "Christianity is Platonism for 'the people'" (BGE Preface).

say, unconditionally, what is the case and what has occurred. With this development is born a key figure in Nietzsche's genealogy: what he variously calls "the European conscience," the "intellectual conscience" [*Gewissen*], "intellectual integrity" [*Rechtschaffenheit*], or "honesty" [*Redlichkeit*].<sup>5</sup> For Nietzsche, this "intellectual conscience" involves a "training in truthfulness" (GM III 27), the "discipline for truth," "the concept of truthfulness [...] understood ever more rigorously" as the demand for "intellectual cleanliness at any price" (GS 357).<sup>6</sup> Further refined, the "father confessor's" demand for truth gives rise to a profound skepticism: the requirement that beliefs, convictions, and ideals be rigorously tested to determine whether or not they are justified and certain.

In fact, this development of the "intellectual conscience" leads to a questioning of the "true world" of Christianity and Platonism. It provokes the suspicion that the existence of God, of otherworldly being, and of innate ideas cannot be adequately demonstrated. It points out, in contrast, that so much else is perfectly clear and demonstrable, particularly, the regularities of nature confirmed by repeated experimental observation. And with this, "the Christian conscience" is "translated and sublimated into the scientific conscience" (GS 357). No longer concerned with the unjustifiable claims of metaphysics and theology, science turns its attention to the natural world, which it aims to master through scrupulous empirical inquiry.

<sup>5</sup> On "intellectual conscience," see AOM 26, GS 2, 99, 335; BGE 205, 230; GM III 24; TI IX 18; A Preface, 12. On "intellectual integrity," see A 36, 50, 53, 59, WP 460. On "honesty," see D 84, 111, 370, 456, 482; GS 107, 110, 114, 319, 335; BGE 5, 227; Z IV 6; GM III 26; A Preface, 12, 52; EH CW 3. One might add to this list Nietzsche's notion of "justice" [*Gerechtigkeit*], discussed more fully in Chap. 4. The importance for Nietzsche of these philological virtues has been discussed by Jaspers (1935, 201-11), Kaufmann (1950, 354-61 and passim), Blanchot (1969, 138, 145), Nancy (1983), Schacht (1983, 99ff), and Schrift (1990, 165-67, 188-90). In what follows, I treat these notions as more or less interchangeable.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. GM III 24ff.

### 1.3 Science as Theology by Other Means

One might suppose that, with the triumph of science, Platonism and Christianity are finally overcome; that, within the scientific worldview, “God is dead” or at least forgotten. This certainly is what contemporary scientific culture believes, according to Nietzsche. When the madman appears among the atheists in the marketplace crying, “God is dead [...] And we have killed him,” they laugh and taunt him. He finally leaves, saying: “I have come too early [...], my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering: it has not yet reached the ears of men [...] This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves” (GS 125). A similar description can be found in the *Genealogy of Morals*. It is said, Nietzsche writes, that contemporary scientific culture has finally vanquished the other-worldly, world-denying “ascetic ideal,”

that it has already conquered this ideal in all important respects: all of modern *science* is supposed to bear witness to that—modern science which, as a genuine philosophy of reality, [...] has up to now survived well enough without God, the beyond, and the virtues of denial. [...] These hard, severe, abstinent, heroic spirits who constitute the honor of our age; all these pale atheists, anti-Christians, immoralists, nihilists; these skeptics, ephectics [...]; these last idealists of knowledge in whom alone the intellectual conscience dwells and is incarnate today—they certainly believe they are as completely liberated from the ascetic ideal as possible [...] (GM III 23-24).

Yet they are mistaken, according to Nietzsche. Science does not represent the triumph over God, the otherworldly, and the ascetic ideal. Though it potentially prepares the way for that triumph, science itself represents, rather, the “*kernel*” of the ascetic ideal, “this ideal itself in its strictest, most spiritual formulation, esoteric through and through with all external additions abolished” (GM III 27). Nietzsche elaborates:

No! this “modern science”—let us face this fact!—is the *best* ally the ascetic ideal has at present, and precisely because it is the most unconscious, involuntary, hidden, and subterranean ally! [...] The ascetic ideal has decidedly not been conquered: if anything, it became stronger, which is to say, more elusive, more spiritual, more captious, as science remorselessly

detached and broke off wall upon wall, external additions that had coarsened its appearance (GM III 25).

This seems a rather odd claim. One might well ask how it is that modern science, which explicitly rejects metaphysics and theology, represents the inner essence of “the ascetic ideal.” Nietzsche explains:

[T]o disclose to them what they themselves cannot see—for they are too close to themselves: this ideal is precisely *their* ideal, too [...]—if I have guessed any riddles, I wish that this proposition might show it—They are far from being *free* spirits: *for they still have faith in truth* [...]; it is precisely in their faith in truth that they are more rigid and unconditional than anyone. [...] That which constrains these men, however, this unconditional will to truth, is *faith in the ascetic ideal itself*, even if as an unconscious imperative—don’t be deceived about that—it is the faith in the *metaphysical* value, the value of *truth in itself* [einen Werth an sich der Wahrheit], sanctioned and guaranteed by this ideal alone (it stands or falls with this ideal) (GM III 24).

Modern science, that is, represents both the essence and consummation of the ascetic ideal insofar as it strips that ideal of all external coverings and reveals what is essential to it and, indeed, to the entirety of Western thought, which, Nietzsche claims, has been predicated upon this ideal.<sup>7</sup> Having rejected the Forms, the Christian God, and other representatives, modern science retains the one conviction with which Western thought commences: faith in the absolute and unconditional value of truth. While it may no longer believe that “God is the truth,” science nonetheless still believes that “truth is divine” (GS 344), that truth must govern every inquiry and serve as its incontestable goal. Nietzsche thus makes the striking assertion that “the death of God” has only derivatively to do with theology and Christianity, that it primarily involves what Heidegger has called a “fundamental structuring” of thought, based upon the accordance of an ultimate value to truth (Heidegger 1943, 64–65). In this

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<sup>7</sup> See GM III 24: “Consider on this question the earliest and most recent philosophers: they are all oblivious of how much the will to truth first requires justification; here there is a lacuna in every philosophy—how did this come about? Because the ascetic ideal has hitherto dominated all philosophy, because truth was posited as being, as God, as the highest court of appeal—because truth was not permitted to be a problem at all.”

sense, according to Nietzsche, even the scientists and “godless anti-metaphysicians” (GS 344) have yet fully to comprehend the meaning of the “death of God.”

It might be objected that the “truth” sought after by science is quite different from the “truth” desired by Platonism and Christianity. For these latter, truth is something otherworldly, not to be found within the natural world; while, for science, truth is entirely this-worldly: it aims simply at the discovery of demonstrable, empirical “facts” about the natural world. Nietzsche acknowledges this difference, and, indeed, often praises science for its this-worldliness.<sup>8</sup> Yet he points out that science still retains the essence of the ascetic ideal insofar as it accords truth *an absolute, unconditional value*. This conviction, Nietzsche insists, is nothing other than a “metaphysical” faith.

Yet, once again, one might ask how this is so. Science does indeed claim truth as its ultimate goal. Yet the truth that it demands is not metaphysical but, on the contrary, physical and empirical, available for all to see. To explain his strange accusation, Nietzsche cites another passage from Book Five of *The Gay Science*: §344, entitled “*How we, too, are still pious.*” This passage begins by praising science for its “intellectual conscience,” for its “mistrust” of “convictions” and its decision to demote them “to the modesty of hypotheses, of a provisional experimental point of view, of a regulative fiction.” Yet he notes that, while the scientific method grants admission to only such provisional, revisable hypotheses, the enterprise of science as a whole rests upon a prior conviction that it is unwilling to give up:

We see that science also rests on a faith [*einem Glauben*]; there is simply no “presuppositionless” science. The question whether *truth* is needed must not only have been affirmed in advance, but affirmed to such a degree that the principle, the faith, the conviction finds expression: “*Nothing* is needed more than *truth*, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value.”

<sup>8</sup> See, especially, A 47-49, where, against the otherworldly “lies” of Christianity, Nietzsche calls science “the ‘wisdom of this world.’” See also GS 293, 355, 357, and TI III 3.

Nietzsche does not object to this conviction on the grounds that it is a "presupposition," since he denies the possibility of a "'presuppositionless' science."<sup>9</sup> What he does object to, however, is the dogmatic nature of this conviction, a dogmatism that proves to be metaphysical. This can be seen, Nietzsche argues, by an inquiry into the motivations and reasons behind the conviction that truth is of ultimate value. He asks what justifies this conviction and considers two possible answers. Perhaps the justification is *pragmatic*: "One does not want to allow oneself to be deceived because one assumes that it is harmful, dangerous, calamitous to be deceived. In this sense, science would be a long-range prudence, a caution, a utility." Yet he argues that this explanation fails to justify the ultimacy of the will to truth, since, on pragmatic considerations, we can see that it is *not* unconditionally harmful to allow oneself to be deceived. While, certainly, the will to truth does serve the interests of life in important ways (e.g., by helping us to determine more or less accurately the conditions that obtain in the world so that we can respond accordingly), it is one of Nietzsche's recurrent insights that the opposite will, the will to ignorance, is equally beneficial in the service of life.<sup>10</sup> He continually points out that human survival is predicated upon conceptual and linguistic abstractions that allow us to reify the ever-changing world and to simplify and select from our multifaceted experience. In this way, he argues, we "lie" in "an extramoral sense"; that is, we strategically, and often unconsciously, overlook and forget features of the world that are not relevant or crucial to our survival or to our particular purposes, interests, values, and goals. Furthermore, in art and dreams, Nietzsche points out, we continually allow ourselves to be deceived. If not beneficial, such lies certainly cannot be considered harmful, except by the most obstinate

<sup>9</sup> See also GM III 24 and II 12. This notion is discussed more fully below.

<sup>10</sup> For some instances of this line of thought, see: OTL; UM II (on the "value for life" of "forgetting" and "the unhistorical"); GS 110-112, 354; BGE 1, 4, 9, 11, 24; TI III, IV, VI; WP 466-617. See also Nehamas (1985: chap 2). I discuss these issues further in section 1.4.2.

Platonist.<sup>11</sup> Hence, the ultimacy of the will to truth is not to be justified on pragmatic grounds.

If this will does not receive a naturalistic, conditional, pragmatic justification, where does its justification come from? If it is not justified by the role it plays in the actual process of inquiry and the actual necessities of life, what justifies it? Nietzsche concludes that it must rest on the *moral* prescription never to deceive, not even oneself. Science, then, would simply represent a “translation and sublimation” of the Christian commandment: “thou shalt not lie.”<sup>12</sup> Were it to be strictly enforced, however, this unconditional proscription would be extremely harmful to natural life, which, in so many ways, requires the “extramoral lie.” Nietzsche concludes that the absolute and unconditional value accorded the will to truth by science is anti-natural, other-worldly, metaphysical:

For you only have to ask yourself carefully, “Why do you not want to deceive?” especially if it should seem [*wenn es den Anschein haben sollte*]—and it does seem! [*und es hat den Anschein*]—as if life rested upon semblance [*Anschein*], I mean error, deception, simulation, delusion, self-delusion, and when the great sweep of life has actually always shown itself to be on the side of the most unscrupulous *polytropoi*. Charitably interpreted, such a resolve might perhaps be a quixotism, a minor slightly mad enthusiasm; but it might also be something more serious, namely a principle that is hostile to life and destructive ... “Will to truth”—that might be a concealed will to death.—Thus the question “Why science?” leads back to the moral problem: *Why have morality at all* when life, nature, and history are “unmoral”? No doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science *thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this “other world”—look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our world*? ... But you will have gathered what I am driving at, namely, that it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests—that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take *our fire*, too, from the flame lit by a faith [*Glaube*] that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine ... But what

<sup>11</sup> On the “deception” of dreams, see OTL 80. On the “deception” of art, see BT/SC 5 and GM III 25.

<sup>12</sup> See GS 357.

if this should become more and more incredible [*unglaubwürdig*], if nothing should prove to be divine any more unless it were error, blindness, the lie,—if God himself should prove to be our most enduring lie?—<sup>13</sup>

Briefly put, Nietzsche argues that, while the “intellectual conscience” that animates modern science demands a rejection of every unconditional faith, science itself is “still unconditional on one point”: regarding its belief in “the absolute value of truth” (GM III 24). This unconditional belief is not only unconscionably dogmatic, but also unconscionably metaphysical, insofar as—against the requirements of “this world, *our* world,” “the world of life, nature, and history”—it receives its justification solely from the otherworldly domain of Christian morality. The “intellectual conscience” thus demands that this final conviction be put into question.

Yet this final conviction is not just one among many. Nietzsche takes it to be *the* conviction upon which all of Western thought is based. A questioning of this conviction, then, amounts to a questioning of Western thought itself. Nietzsche makes clear that this is just what “the death of God” entails and just what the “intellectual conscience” requires. Impelled by the “intellectual conscience,” science demands its own self-overcoming. Insofar as science represents the kernel and esoteric form of the ascetic ideal, this self-overcoming of science is, at the same time, a self-overcoming of the ascetic ideal ...

This pair, science and the ascetic ideal, both rest on the same foundation—I have already indicated it: on the same overestimation of truth (more exactly: on the same belief that truth is *inestimable* and *cannot* be criticized). Therefore they are *necessarily* allies, so that if they are to be fought they can only be fought and called in question together. A depreciation of the ascetic ideal unavoidably involves a depreciation of science: one must keep one’s eyes and ears open to this fact! (GM III 25)

... and this self-overcoming of the ascetic ideal points to the self-overcoming of Western thought.

Consider on this question both the earliest and most recent philosophers: they are all oblivious of how much the will to truth itself first requires

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. WP 1011.

justification; here there is a lacuna in every philosophy—how did this come about? Because the ascetic ideal has hitherto *dominated* all philosophy, because truth was posited as being, as God, as the highest court of appeal—because truth was not *permitted* to be a problem at all. [...]—From the moment faith in the God of the ascetic ideal is denied, *a new problem arises*: that of the *value* of truth. The will to truth requires a critique—let us thus define our own task,—the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question* (GM III 24).<sup>14</sup>

[W]hat meaning would *our* whole being possess if it were not this, that in us the will to truth becomes conscious of itself as a *problem*? ... As the will to truth thus gains self-consciousness, from now on—there can be no doubt about it—morality [read: the ascetic ideal and the otherworldly generally] will go to *ruin*: this is the great spectacle in a hundred acts reserved for the next two centuries in Europe—the most terrible, most questionable, and perhaps the most hopeful of all spectacles ... (GM III 27)

With this, the trajectory of Western thought nears its end—or rather, it nears its mid-point. For Nietzsche, our modernity marks not the end of history but the inauguration of a new history, “a higher history than all history hitherto” (GS 125). It marks not the “dusk” of infinite wisdom, but the innocence of “daybreak.” But that dawn is as yet merely announced. At present, we remain at “midnight,” between the old day and the new. This dark night is characterized by “nihilism,” the general malaise brought upon Western culture by its recognition that “the highest values [i.e., truth, God, being] devalue themselves” (WP 2). This nihilism, Nietzsche argues, still essentially belongs to the old day; it remains a “shadow of God” (GS 108). For, though the nihilist acknowledges that all absolute values have devaluated themselves, she still laments their loss, and what remains still appears valueless. The nihilist does not yet *affirm* “the death of God” and its consequences.

Nietzsche, however, urges us to push what is falling.<sup>15</sup> Wishing to become “the first perfect nihilist of Europe who, however, has [...] lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself” (WP Preface 3), Nietzsche encourages an

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. BGE 1; A 8.

<sup>15</sup> See Z III 12.

"active nihilism" (WP 22-23) that will bring the old epoch to a close.<sup>16</sup> This is the momentous task toward which Nietzsche directs his energies; and the achievement of this task will bring us to the final phase of his genealogy of Western thought.

Thus far, we have seen that metaphysics and theology overcome themselves through science, and that science, too, ends in a self-overcoming. What follows this self-overcoming of science? To answer this question, and to move from science to its successor discourse, we must first take up the task announced above, the first part of the revaluation of values: the revaluation of truth.

#### 1.4 The Revaluation of Truth I: Being, Becoming, and Appearing

Nietzsche's genealogy of Western thought culminates in a "critique" of the "will to truth," a demand that "the value of truth [...] for once be experimentally *called into question*" (GM III 24). What does this critique entail? And what, for Nietzsche, remains of truth?

Nietzsche clearly considered the issue of truth to be of central philosophical and cultural importance. From his earliest essays through his final notes, he constantly returns to this topic, analyzing it and discussing it in novel and often controversial ways. These texts have recently attracted much attention, and the quantity of commentary on Nietzsche's discussions of truth has grown rapidly over the past few decades.<sup>17</sup> For the most part, these discussions have attempted to extract from Nietzsche's elusive comments a "theory of truth." Yet these investigations have failed to produce any consensus. Indeed, every major

<sup>16</sup> Cf. WP Preface 3.

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Danto (1965, *passim*), Granier (1966b), Müller-Lauter (1971, chap. 5), Wilcox (1974), (1980), (1983) and (1986), Warnock (1978), Derrida (1978), Breazeale (1979), Magnus (1980), Hinman (1982), Schacht (1983, chap. II), Nancy (1983), Mittelman (1984), Westphal (1984), Nehamas (1983), (1985, chap. 2) and (1986), Crowell (1987), Nola (1987), Bittner (1987), Clark (1990), Schrift (1990, chap. 6), Gemes (1992), Hales and Welshon (1994).

theory of truth (correspondence, pragmatic, coherence, semantic) has been attributed to Nietzsche by one commentator or another,<sup>18</sup> while still others have argued that Nietzsche does not provide a theory of truth and is not interested in doing so.<sup>19</sup>

Oddly enough, I think that each of these views are accurate, in some respect; and, below, I will give some indication of why I think this is so. However, the debate over which theory of truth to attribute to Nietzsche seems to me to be improperly framed; and I will not enter into it directly here. Rather, I want to suggest that we arrive at a better sense of what truth is and is not, for Nietzsche, by following through with what he himself takes to be the crucial consideration: the question as to the *value* of truth, or rather, the question of how truth ought to be *revalued* in light of his genealogy of Western thought.

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<sup>18</sup> The *correspondence theory of truth* states that a statement or belief is true if and only if it accurately represents "reality," "the world," "states of affairs," or "the facts." Versions of the correspondence theory of truth are explicitly attributed to Nietzsche by Westphal (1984), Nola (1987) and Clark (1990, chaps. 2, 4, and *passim*). A "metaphysical" version of the correspondence theory of truth is implicitly attributed to Nietzsche by many writers who argue that Nietzsche conceives of the ultimate nature of reality as "becoming," "chaos," or "will to power," regardless of whether or not we can adequately think or communicate the character of the world as such. See, e.g., Danto (1965, 80, 96-7), Granier (1966b), (1971), Wilcox (1974, 132-33), Grimm (1978, 30 and *passim*), and Mittelman (1984). A version of the correspondence theory also seems implicit in many writers' emphasis upon Nietzsche's language of "honesty," "aptness," and "justice." See, e.g., Jaspers (1935, 201-11), Kaufmann (1950, 354-61), Schacht (1983, 63, 66, 95-117), and Schrift (1990, 155, 188ff). The *pragmatic theory of truth* states that a statement or belief is true if and only if it is, in some respect, useful. This theory is attributed to Nietzsche by Danto (1965, chap. 3), Grimm (1978, chap. 2 and *passim*) and (1979), and Stack (1991, 36) and (1992, 77). Other commentators argue that Nietzsche affirms the pragmatic theory of truth on at least one level within a multi-levelled theory of truth: see Granier (1966b, 198-99), Warnock (1978, 49, 51ff), Schacht (1983, 71ff), and Nola (1987). The *coherence theory of truth* states that a statement or belief is true if and only if it coheres or fits within the system of connected statements and beliefs that constitutes our knowledge. Schacht (1983, 63, 66ff) and Magnus (1978, 29, 201) and (1980, 265) argue that Nietzsche's theory of truth is, at least in part, a coherence theory. The *semantic theory of truth*, formulated by Alfred Tarski decades after Nietzsche's death, states that a sentence is true, in a given language, if it satisfies the rules by which sentences in the language and objects are picked out and correlated with one another. (It is of some debate, among Nietzsche scholars and philosophers generally, to what degree this theory is a correspondence theory). This conception of truth is attributed to Nietzsche by Nola (1987, 538ff) and Clark (1990, 32, 38-40, 61, 135). It should be noted that many commentators attribute to Nietzsche a hybrid or multi-levelled theory of truth that combines several of the theories described above.

<sup>19</sup> See Nehamas (1985, 54-55) and Gemes (1992, 48).

### 1.4.1 *Truth, Being, and Becoming*

This revaluation obviously presupposes some preliminary characterization of truth. That characterization is provided, for Nietzsche, by the history of metaphysics, which, he argues, retains, from Plato through positivism, essentially the same conception of truth: truth considered as the absolute priority of determining "what is" apart from "what becomes" and "what merely seems or appears to be."

With regard to this conception of truth, as we have seen, the advent of modern science represents, for Nietzsche, a decisive step in the history of metaphysics; for science turns its attention away from the Platonic-Christian "world of being" toward the "world of becoming"—the spatio-temporal, physical, natural, and empirical world. Moreover, as it develops, science casts off its residual ties with theology, gradually rejecting the deism with which it was still initially imbued. "Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and governance of a god; interpreting history in honor of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes," Nietzsche writes, "that is *all over* now, that has man's conscience against it, that is considered indecent and dishonest by every more refined conscience" (GS 357).<sup>20</sup> The revolution of science, then, marks a movement toward the affirmation of "a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature" (GS 109) and a restoration of the "innocence of becoming" (TI VI 8).

Yet Nietzsche thinks that the major scientific theories and methods of the nineteenth-century—mechanism, evolutionism, and positivism—still harbor a residual theology that corrupts the "innocence of becoming": they still attempt to discover a "world of being" as the ground and essence of the "world of becoming."<sup>21</sup> The "necessity," "law," "atomism,"

<sup>20</sup> Cf. BGE 209: "science has most happily rid itself of theology, whose 'handmaid' it was too long."

<sup>21</sup> On mechanism, see GS 109, 373; BGE 21, 22, 36, 213; GM II 12; WP 618-19, 634-35, 689, 708, 712, 1066. On evolutionary theory, see TL; UM II; GS 349; GM II 12-13; WP

and "equilibrium" central to mechanistic physics, the "struggle for preservation" and inherent teleology of evolutionary theory, and the "facts" and "disinterested observation" desired by positivism—all of this represents, for Nietzsche, simply another attempt to place becoming in the service of being, to claim that becoming and change are always governed by, tend toward, or are reducible to some static, enduring, and isolable thing or state.

Nietzsche's arguments against these various scientific theories are manifold and complex; and a discussion of his philosophy of science and nature would take us too far afield.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Nietzsche's general point is relatively simple. He does not object to these or any other scientific theories on the basis of their pragmatic aims—their desire to select, simplify, quantify, and map relative tendencies, and to hierarchize appearances for the purposes of increasing our ability to cope with the natural environment. What he objects to is the scientific tendency to *forget* that these are indeed pragmatic constructions and the consequent claim to have simply sketched from reality itself this picture of a simple and stable world.

One should not understand this *compulsion* to construct species, forms, purposes, laws—"a world of identical cases"—as if they enabled us to fix the *true world*; but as a compulsion to arrange a world for ourselves in which *our existence* is made possible—we thereby create a world which is calculable, simplified, comprehensible, etc., for us (WP 521).<sup>23</sup>

What is objectionable and ultimately indemonstrable, for Nietzsche, is the idea that the world follows some grand plan that involves a resolution of becoming into being, into some terminal state or thing. For Nietzsche, once we give up faith in the "true world" of the Platonists and Christians, we should come to see our world in a new light: as a

647-50, 684-85, 709, 881. On positivism, see GS 347, 373; BGE 10, 204, 210; GM III 24; WP 1, 120. 481.

<sup>22</sup> For further discussion of some these issues, see Moles (1990) and the references in his bibliography.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. BGE 14.

becoming without beginning, end, origin, purpose, goal, or privileged aspect.<sup>24</sup> While we may be able to isolate, within this becoming, some tendencies, regularities, and solidities, we should remember that, in doing so, we are marking only *relative movements*, regularities, durabilities, and phenomena that, considered from a different perspective or framework (e.g., from different points in the universe, over much larger or smaller time-spans, with keener faculties of perception) would appear otherwise (i.e., as having other modes of individuation, as ongoing processes rather than stable states, as moving in contrary directions, etc.).<sup>25</sup>

Duration, identity with itself, being are inherent neither in that which is called subject nor in that which is called object; they are complexes of events apparently durable in comparison with other complexes—e.g., through the difference in tempo of the event (rest-movement, firm-loose: oppositions that do not exist in themselves and that actually express only *variations in degree* that from a certain perspective appear to be oppositions. There are no opposites: only from those of logic do we derive the concept of opposites—and falsely transfer it to things) (WP 552).<sup>26</sup>

In short, Nietzsche wants to argue that, contrary to metaphysics, being and becoming are not opposed to one another. Rather, for Nietzsche, being is a mode of becoming—becoming seen from a particular perspective, which, however, will always conflict with others and can claim no ultimate priority.

This re-orientation of the relationship between being and becoming also re-orient the determination of truth. If truth, for metaphysics, consisted in the determination of being apart from all becoming, the result of Nietzsche's argument is that truth must now take its place within the world of becoming: within a world that is in constant movement and

<sup>24</sup> See GS 109; BGE 22; TI VI 8; WP 708, 711, 1062-67.

<sup>25</sup> See D 117: "If our eyes were a hundredfold sharper, man would appear to us tremendously tall; it is possible, indeed, to imagine organs by virtue of which he would be felt as immeasurable. On the other hand, organs could be so constituted that whole solar systems were viewed contracted and packed together like a single cell: and to beings of an opposite constitution a cell of the human body could present itself, in motion, construction and harmony, as a solar system."

<sup>26</sup> Cf. GS 110-112; WP 521, 523.

alteration, and which appears differently from every point.<sup>27</sup> In this new guise, truth comes to be concerned not with the determination of absolute and ultimate being, but with a delimitation of the various perspectives within which the world *appears* as being such and such.

#### 1.4.2 *Truth, Being, and Appearing*

This re-orientation of truth points toward what could be considered the central concern in Nietzsche's discussions of truth and knowledge: the attempt to reconcile truth with what has always been considered its arch-enemy—semblance [*der Schein*] or appearance [*die Erscheinung*]. Indeed, for Nietzsche, this reconciliation is already implied in the reconciliation of truth and being with becoming. For, following ancient philosophy, Nietzsche conceives of the “world of becoming” not simply as a world of “constant change” but as also a world of “changing aspects,” a world which takes on different appearances when considered from different points of view.<sup>28</sup> To relocate truth within the world of becoming, then, is also relocate it within the world of seeming and appearance; it is to say that “the ‘apparent’ [»*scheinbare*«] world is the only one” (TI III 2),<sup>29</sup> and that, if truth is to exist at all, it must take its place within this “apparent” world.

Again, Nietzsche conceives of his task as a continuation and radicalization of the project of modern science, which turned the intellect’s attention away from the fraudulent other-

<sup>27</sup> See WP 568.

<sup>28</sup> According to Terence Irwin, the notion of “becoming” or “flux,” for Heraclitus, Plato, and Aristotle, involves not only “local movement” and “qualitative alteration”—what Irwin calls “self-change”—but also “aspect change,” “things with compresent opposite properties [...] resulting from dependence on different situations” (1977, 4-5). John Richardson (1989) has argued that “becoming” holds this sense for Nietzsche as well, helping to account for the doctrine of perspectivism. Thus, on Richardson’s reading of Nietzsche, “to say that things become is to say that they ‘come to be’ one way from one point of view, and another way from another, and that some at least of these opposing perspectives are equally legitimate” (136).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. BGE 34; TI III 6; WP 566-68.

worldly claims of Platonism and Christianity toward the worldly realm of nature and becoming. Having rejected the other-worldly conception of truth and knowledge as the attempt to achieve absolute certainty and to grasp unconditional, necessary, and eternal entities, Nietzsche, following the lead of science, attempts to re-situate truth and knowledge within the actual conditions of human inquiry and within "the world of life, nature, and history" (GS 344). Yet we have seen that, for Nietzsche, "life rest[s] on semblance [...], error, deception, simulation, delusion, self-delusion [*das Leben [legt] auf Anschein, [...] Irrthum, Betrug, Verstellung, Blendung, Selbstverblendung [an]*]" (GS 344), or, as he puts it in the 1886 preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, "all of life rests upon semblance, art, deception, points of view, and the necessity of perspectives and error [*alles Leben ruht auf Schein, Kunst, Täuschung, Optik, Notwendigkeit des Perspektivischen und des Irrthums*]" (BT/SC 5).<sup>30</sup> If this is so, it does not seem likely that anything akin to truth will be discovered within the realm of "life."

This, certainly, was Plato's conclusion, and that of metaphysics ever since. Yet, Nietzsche thinks otherwise. It is his contention that, when we investigate the actual conditions and processes of human knowledge and inquiry, we find that, as with truth and becoming, truth and semblance (i.e., "art, deception, points of view, and the necessity of perspectives and error") are not at all opposed, but rather are constantly and necessarily intermingled with one another.<sup>31</sup> Any attempt to reject this supposition, he argues, simply betrays a "hostility to life," a metaphysical desire to negate "the world of life, nature, and history" in favor of "another world," which, however, remains "indemonstrable."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Cf. the 1886 preface to *Human, All Too Human*: "Enough, I am still living; and life is, after all, not a product of morality: it *wants* deception, it *lives* on deception ...but there you are, I am already off again, am I not, and doing what I have always done, old immoralist and bird-catcher that I am—speaking unmorally, extra-morally, "beyond good and evil'?" (1)

<sup>31</sup> See BGE 2, 24, 34.

<sup>32</sup> This statement is culled from BT/SC 5, GS 344, TI III 6, GM III 28, and EH IV 8.

This is a controversial set of claims. Not only is it unclear why "life" has essentially to do with "semblance" and why this latter is akin to "art," "error," "deception," "perspectivity," etc.; it also seems utterly paradoxical that truth and semblance, as Nietzsche claims, are fundamentally related to one another. Nevertheless, one finds such claims throughout Nietzsche's work. In an effort to fill out those claims, I want to collect Nietzsche's "truth" language under the heading "the will to truth" and his "semblance" language under the heading "the will to deception" in order to show how, within the parameters of "life" and "knowledge," both are justified and indeed commingled.<sup>33</sup>

The scientific rejection of metaphysics, according to Nietzsche, allows the emergence of a question that had thus far been foreclosed: the question concerning the *value* of both truth and deception. Having abolished morality as the ultimate tribunal, truth ought not to be determined in advance as unquestionably "good," nor ought deception to be determined in advance as unquestionably "evil." Rather the respective values of truth and deception are now to be determined "experimentally"<sup>34</sup> through an experiment carried out "beyond good and evil."<sup>35</sup> The new tribunal, according to Nietzsche, is that of "life," which concerns the actual conditions for the existence, preservation, and flourishing of natural beings, humans included.<sup>36</sup> This change of tribunal means that the "will to truth" is no longer to be considered a divine gift or command, nor is the "will to deception" to be considered sign of immorality. Rather, both "wills" are to be viewed as natural, physico-psychological

<sup>33</sup> Alexander Nehamas has presented a somewhat similar analysis in (1985, chap. 2), an earlier version of which appeared as "Will to Knowledge, Will to Ignorance and Will to Power in *Beyond Good and Evil*" (1986). Nehamas takes his terms from BGE 24, where Nietzsche speaks of "*der Wille zum Wissen*" and "*der Wille zur Nicht-wissen*" or "*Unwissen*." I take my terms from BGE 2 and GM III 25, where Nietzsche speaks of "*der Wille zur Wahrheit*" and "*der Wille zur Täuschung*."

<sup>34</sup> See GM III 24.

<sup>35</sup> See BGE 4, 2.

<sup>36</sup> See WP 495.

impulses developed within a particular species of life to help it to cope with its conditions of existence.

The results of Nietzsche's "experiments" concerning truth can be summarized as follows: (i) to the degree that it is satisfiable, the "will to truth"—the desire to accurately represent the world as it really is—is not necessarily what is most useful, beneficial, or of highest value for "life"; (ii) the "will to deception"—the will to consciously or unconsciously select from, simplify, embellish, or ignore features of the world<sup>37</sup>—is not necessarily bad, but, indeed, can be of tremendous value; (iii) both the "will to truth" and the "will to deception" can be seen to affirm and to negate the interests of "life"; and (iv) the "will to truth" and the "will to deception" can be seen to require and to supplement one another in even the most rigorous intellectual inquiry.

Nietzsche consistently makes the point that, in the actual practice of our everyday and scientific inquiry, truth is not solely what we are after. First of all, we are selective with regard to what concerns us. We do not make it our task to provide an infinitely detailed description of the state of everything in the universe at every given moment. Were it possible, such a description would not only be too complex and full of trivia, but would also be too fleeting, requiring infinitely many such descriptions every second. Therefore, we make do with vastly simplified representations of even the small portion of the universe with which we are, for the most part, concerned.<sup>38</sup> We describe this limited domain using a host of generalizations that smooth over myriad particularities, differences, irregularities, and anomalous cases in order to satisfy cognitive interests other than that of precise description.<sup>39</sup> Weighing the demands of precision and scope against those of coherence,

<sup>37</sup> In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche names this "will to deception" "interpretation" [*Interpretation*], which requires the "forcing, adjusting, abbreviating, omitting, padding, inventing, [and] falsifying" of particular features of the world in the service of "life" (III 24).

<sup>38</sup> See BGE 230.

<sup>39</sup> See OTL 83.

utility, clarity, explanatory and predictive power, we try to achieve a balance that describes as much as possible about the world (or some part of it) with the greatest possible economy and systematicity.<sup>40</sup> We see the world as composed of subsistent, self-identical “beings,” even though, examined closely, the world is always in flux and beings are constantly becoming-other, either through spatial, temporal, physical, chemical, and biological changes, or through reconsideration within new perspectives, modes of inquiry, and linguistic and conceptual sortings.<sup>41</sup> We subsume temporally diverse sensory experiences under a single name, identifying them as composing the “same” object or person;<sup>42</sup> and we view the world in terms of species and kinds that are sorted by classificatory schemes which determine features as “important” or “unimportant” relative to our particular purposes.<sup>43</sup> The more successful these simplifications, selections, and classifications prove to be for us, the more entrenched they become, and the more “real” and “true” they are taken to be. In other words, rather than simply describing the world as we find it, we as much fabricate it to suit our needs: that is, we individuate, sort, select, classify, and weight features of the world so as to make it more comprehensible, calculable, predictable—in short, more *habitable* for human beings.<sup>44</sup> “Science at its best,” Nietzsche writes, “seeks most to keep us in this *simplified*, thoroughly artificial, suitably constructed and suitably falsified world—[...] it loves error, because, being alive, it loves life” (BGE 24).

<sup>40</sup> On economy of method, see BGE 13, 36. This point has been repeatedly made, within the context of contemporary philosophy of science, by Nelson Goodman. See Goodman (1976, 262-65) and (1978, 18, 120-21). See also Cartwright (1983: esp. chap. 2) for an argument that the great explanatory power of the fundamental laws of physics is proportional to their falsehood.

<sup>41</sup> See GS 110, 112, 121 Note that Nietzsche joins company with more recent philosophers such as W.V. Quine, who maintains that such things as “physical objects,” “forces,” and “the abstract entities which are the substance of mathematics” are simply “myths,” “posit[s] comparable, epistemologically, to the gods of Homer” (1951, 44-45).

<sup>42</sup> See OTL 83; GS 335; WP 508ff.

<sup>43</sup> See OTL 83; WP 521. For a similar point, see Elgin (1989).

<sup>44</sup> See BGE 14

Yet this is not to argue that truth is equivalent to utility. Nietzsche constantly reminds us that the demands for utility and for truth are quite often at odds with one another.

We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live—by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content: without these articles of faith nobody could now endure life. But that does not prove them. Life is no argument; the conditions of life might include error [*Irrthum*] (GS 121).<sup>45</sup>

Even so, he is quick to add that this is not meant as a condemnation of the will to error and deception:

The falseness [*Falschheit*] of a judgment is not for us necessarily an objection to a judgment; in this respect our new language may sound strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating. And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments [...] are indispensable for us; [...] that renouncing the falsest judgments would mean renouncing life and a denial of life. To recognize untruth as a condition of life—that certainly means resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way; and a philosophy that risks this would by that token alone place itself beyond good and evil (BGE 4).

Each of these passages claim that, strictly speaking, the simplifications and categorizations taken for granted by our science and common sense are not “true,” that, from some other perspective and by other criteria, they would be seen as “erroneous” or “false”; and yet these passages seem to point in opposite directions: one toward truth in spite of utility, the other toward utility in spite of truth. This is no inconsistency, on Nietzsche’s part. Rather, when these passages are read together, it becomes clear that Nietzsche does not want to condemn or celebrate either the “will to deception” or the “will to truth.” While he wants to reveal the extent to which the “will to deception” is operative and highly useful in our everyday and scientific formulations of the world, he is also concerned to remind us that these formulations are artificial and contingent.

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. BGE 39; EH Preface 3; WP 493

We can see that, on both sides, Nietzsche's target is metaphysics and its kin, theology and morality, which claim that truth is of absolute value and leads to the revelation of a "true world." On the one hand, Nietzsche argues that, contrary to demands of metaphysics, theology, and morality, our inquiry does not unconditionally strive for the truth—for the "plain facts"—but instead has constant recourse to useful fictions and artificial constructions. On the other hand—and this point is crucial—he argues that a recognition of this artificiality should tempt us away from the essentialist view that science (or any other discourse) discovers a "real" and "true" world. Indeed, for Nietzsche, the conviction that there exists such a "true world" is simply a metaphysical conviction.<sup>46</sup> Hence, a recognition of the artificiality and arbitrariness (the "falsehood") of a particular construction of the world is simply a recognition that *it could be constructed otherwise*, and that what resists such novel construction is not the "way the world really is," but the entrenchment of a particular conception of the world.<sup>47</sup> Thus, in a telling passage, Nietzsche writes:

*Only as creators! [Nur als Schaffende!]— This has given me the greatest trouble and still does: to realize that *what things are called* is incomparably more important than what they are. The reputation, name, and appearance [*Anschein*], the usual measure and weight of a thing, what it counts for— originally almost always wrong [*ein Irrthum*] and arbitrary, thrown over things like a dress and altogether foreign to their essence [*Wesen*] and even their skin—all this develops from generation to generation, merely because people believe in it, until it gradually grows onto and into the thing and becomes its very body. What at first was semblance [*Schein*] becomes at last, almost invariably, the essence [*Wesen*], and functions [*wirkt*] as essence. How foolish it would be to suppose that one only needs to point out this origin and misty shroud of delusion in order to *destroy* the world that counts for real, so-called "*reality*" [»*Wirklichkeit*«]. We can destroy only as creators!—But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new "things" (GS 58).*

<sup>46</sup> See BGE 2, 3, 34; TI III 2, 6, IV; WP 566-67.

<sup>47</sup> See GS 110: "the *strength* of knowledge does not depend on its degree of truth, but on its age, on the degree to which it has been incorporated, on its character as a condition of life."

While, at the beginning of this passage, Nietzsche seems to maintain an opposition between essence and appearance, by the end, this distinction has been undercut. Reading backwards, we are led to believe that even those “original essences” were simply naturalized constructions or “semblances.” Thus, Nietzsche comes to figure the distinction between “essence” and “appearance” not as one of kind but as one of degree. “What is” has become so through its articulation within a system that has secured itself through utility and habit. To see things otherwise is to have created a new interpretation that individuates things differently and ascribes to them different origins and ends. And for this new, ~~defined~~ “wrong,” interpretation to become “right,” for this “semblance” to become “reality,” one has only to campaign on its behalf such that someday it gets taken for granted.<sup>48</sup>

I will return to these issues below. For the present discussion, the important point is that, rather than being concerned with a world of “truth” and “being” (in the strict, metaphysical senses), we are always concerned with a world of “seeming” and “appearance”: a world that seems or appears to be such and such from a given perspective or interpretation.<sup>49</sup> “Let at least this much be admitted,” writes Nietzsche,

<sup>48</sup> My reading of this passage thus differs significantly from the skeptical reading offered by Stephen Houlgate, who argues that this passage’s apparent collapse of the opposition between essence and appearance actually presupposes that very opposition. Houlgate construes Nietzsche as beginning from the presupposition that there was once a distinction between essence and appearance, but that this distinction is now impossible to discern, since alien appearances have veiled and, by now, fused with essences to such a degree that the latter are no longer distinguishable or knowable (1993, 118, 141-42, 145-46). I maintain, on the contrary, that Nietzsche rejects the very notion that the distinction between essence and appearance is one of kind, arguing instead that it is simply one of degree—that essences are simply established appearances. Several other passages support my anti-skeptical reading, e.g., UM II 3, where Nietzsche notes that every “first nature was once a second nature and [...] every victorious second nature will become a first,” and GS 290, which offers a similar conception of the interpretive construction of “first natures” out of “second natures.” (See also the account of “things” and their role in “interpretations” given in GM II 12, which is discussed at length in Chapter 4). Note that this scenario also recalls the famous passage from “On Truth and Lies,” where Nietzsche describes truth as an ever-shifting system in which the strange and new has become the familiar and taken for granted, and those passages in Nietzsche’s later work where he argues that “knowledge” consists simply in the reduction of the strange to the familiar (see, e.g., GS 355, TI VI 5, WP 499, 501, 551).

<sup>49</sup> Here, I treat these notions as more or less equivalent. The relation between these two notions in Nietzsche’s work is discussed more fully in Chapter 4.

there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspective estimates and appearances; and if, with the virtuous enthusiasm and clumsiness of some philosophers, one wanted to abolish the "apparent world" altogether—well, supposing you could do that, at least nothing would be left of your "truth" either (BGE 34).<sup>50</sup>

Nietzsche recognizes and affirms that it is a constitutive feature of natural creatures that they construe the world from a particular perspective and cannot avoid doing so. They are always situated at a particular time and place; and they relate to their environment in ways shaped by their prior development, and their current capacities, habits, and skills. This is no less the case for human beings. Each of us sees from a particular point of view, defined as much by what it excludes as by what it includes. Film theorists have noted that the camera image is defined by a host of exclusions: by what lies outside the four sides of the frame, beyond its depth of field, and behind the position of the camera; by what has gone into the composition of the image before the shot was taken; and by one's previous training in the various semiotic codes that allow one to see the picture as a representing such and such. The same is true of human vision itself, which not only has a spatially limited purview, but also functions as part of an organism with a range of biological, cultural, and individual needs and desires that determine in advance horizons of significance.<sup>51</sup>

This analysis can be further extended to "perspectives" in a broader sense: for instance, to "disciplines," "methodologies," "styles," "worldviews," and "ideologies." Each such "perspective" marks out a field of concern on the basis of particular presuppositions, needs, desires, goals, aims, and objects of inquiry. And, while it may be relatively easy to take up different visual perspectives, it is considerably more difficult to master different "disciplines," "methodologies," and "styles," and notoriously more difficult still to take up different "worldviews" and "ideologies." Moreover, simply combining all these different

<sup>50</sup> Cf. WP 567.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Marx's comment that "[t]he *development* of the five senses is a labor of the whole previous history of the world" (1844, 59). Also cf. Goodman (1976, 3-19).

perspectives will not yield a total view, since each is in conflict with many others with regard to prominent presuppositions, methods, aims, and conclusions.<sup>52</sup>

"Truth" and "knowledge," then, always take their place within the world of "perspective"—that is, within the world of "appearance" and "semblance." However, it should be said that this is not a mere reversal of the metaphysical view, according to which the "will to truth" and the "will to deception" are deemed, respectively, good and evil. That is, Nietzsche is not arguing for a rejection of every notion of truth in favor of semblance, error, and deception. Among other problems, such a move would maintain the "faith in opposite values" which Nietzsche calls "the fundamental faith of the metaphysicians" (BGE 2). On the contrary, an "experimental," anti-metaphysical investigation like Nietzsche's, one that situates itself "beyond good and evil," must give up this faith and instead recognize that nature, life, and history countenance no "opposites" but "only degrees and many subtleties of gradation" (BGE 24).<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Nietzsche comes to reject the supposition "that there is an essential opposition of the 'true' and 'false'" and discovers instead that there are only "degrees of apparentness [*Scheinbarkeit*] and, as it were, lighter and darker shadows and shades of appearance—different 'values' [*valeurs*], to use the language of painters" (BGE 34). Rather than seeing them in opposition, then, Nietzsche comes to see that, at their best, the "will to truth" and the "will to deception" supplement one another and are not opposites but "refinement[s]" of one another (BGE 34).

Thus, Nietzsche does not argue for an unqualified indulgence in the "will to deception." To the contrary, he contends that, on the chromatic spectrum of "truth" and "deception," both extremes are to be avoided. Having noted the dangers of "the unconditional will to

<sup>52</sup> Nehamas points out the impossibility of such conjunction through a poignant aesthetic example: "the understanding of everything would be like a painting that incorporates all styles or that is painted in no style at all—a true chimera, both impossible and monstrous" (1985, 51).

<sup>53</sup> Cf. HAH 1; WS 67; GS 1, 375; BGE 2, 3; WP 37, 552.

truth," and having reinstated "semblance," "appearance," "error," "deception," and "perspective" to their rightful place within "the general economy of life" (BGE 23), Nietzsche is also concerned to show that the "will to deception" can be put to use against the interests of "life."

The most obvious case is that of the "believers," the metaphysicians and theologians who "lie" in an objectionable, *moral* sense. According to Nietzsche, these "believers" have not yet made the scientific turn, and are thus out of step with the "intellectual conscience" of the age. They do not adequately scrutinize their convictions and beliefs, but instead claim them to be exempt from consideration by the mistrustful gaze of science, which demands a restraint of the "will to deception" and an attention to both reason and sense-evidence.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, Nietzsche writes:

One sort of honesty [*Redlichkeit*] has been alien to all founders of religions and their kind:—they have never made their experiences a matter of conscience for knowledge. "What have I actually experienced? What happened in me and around me at that time? Was my reason bright enough? Was my will opposed to all deceits [*Betrügereien*] of the senses and bold in resisting the fantastic?"—none of them has asked such questions, nor do any of our dear religious people ask them even now: rather, they thirst after things that are *contrary to reason*, and they do not wish to make it too hard for themselves to satisfy it,—so they experience "miracles" and "rebirths" and hear the voices of little angels! But we, we others who thirst after reason, are determined to scrutinize our experiences as severely as a scientific experiment, hour after hour, day after day. We ourselves wish to be our own experiments and guinea pigs (GS 319).

*[T]he great majority of people lacks an intellectual conscience; indeed, it has often seemed to me as if anyone calling for an intellectual conscience were as lonely in the most densely populated cities as if he were in a desert. Everyone looks at you with strange eyes and goes right on handling his scales, calling this good and that evil; nobody even blushes when you intimate that their weights are underweight,—nor do people feel outraged:*

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<sup>54</sup> Note that, while Nietzsche often criticizes the ability of sense-evidence to deliver unqualified "facts" about the world (see, e.g., GS 114; BGE 14; WP 516), he nonetheless considers its testimony an important criterion (see, e.g., BGE 134; TI III 3); and while Nietzsche often criticizes reason for its opposition to the natural world of becoming (see, e.g., TI III), he nonetheless often praises reason as that which demands "honesty" and "intellectual conscience" (see GS 319, cited immediately below; A 12). The notions of "honesty" and "intellectual conscience" are discussed below.

they merely laugh at your doubts. I mean: *the great majority of people* does not consider it contemptible to believe this or that and to live accordingly, *without first becoming aware of the final and most certain reasons for and against, and without even troubling themselves about such reasons* afterward: the most gifted men and the noblest women still belong to this "great majority." [...] Among certain pious people I found a hatred of reason and was well disposed to them for that; for this at least betrayed their bad intellectual conscience. But to stand in the midst of this *rerum concordia discors* and of this whole wonderful uncertainty and richness of existence *without questioning*, without trembling with the craving and the rapture of such questioning [...]—that is what I feel to be *contemptible* [...] (GS 2).

We "men of knowledge" [»*Erkennenden*«] have gradually come to mistrust believers [*Gläubige*] of all kinds; our mistrust has gradually brought us to make inferences the reverse of those of former days: wherever the strength of a faith [*Glaubens*] is very prominently displayed, we infer a certain weakness of demonstrability [*Beweisbarkeit*], even the *improbability* of what is believed [*Geglaubten*]. We, too, do not deny that faith [*Glaube*] "makes blessed": that is precisely *why* we deny that faith *proves* [*beweist*] anything,—a strong faith that makes blessed raises suspicion against that which is believed; it does not establish "truth," it establishes a certain probability—of *deception* [*Täuschung*] (GM III 24).<sup>55</sup>

At this point I do not let myself off without a psychology of "faith" [»*Glaubens*«], of "believers" [»*Gläubigen*«]. If today there is no lack of people who do not know in what way it is *indecent* to "believe"—or a sign of decadence, of broken will to life—tomorrow they will already know it. [...] It seems to me that among Christians there is a kind of criterion of truth that is called the "proof of strength" [»*Beweis der Kraft*«]. "Faith makes blessed: *hence* it is true."—Here one might object first that it is precisely the making blessed which is not proved [*bewiesen*] but merely *promised*: blessedness tied to the condition of "faith"—one *shall* become blessed *because* one believes ... But whether what the priest promises the believer in fact occurs in a "beyond" which is not subject to any test [*Controle*]—how is *that* proved [*bewiese*]? The alleged "proof of strength" is at bottom merely another faith, namely, that the effect one expects from faith will not fail to appear. In a formula: "I believe that faith makes blessed;—consequently it is true."—But with this we are already at an end. This "consequently" would be absurdity itself as the criterion of truth. [...] The experience of all severe, of all profoundly inclined spirits teaches the *opposite*. [...] Faith makes blessed: consequently it lies (A 50).

In these and other passages, Nietzsche argues against the "deceptions" of the "believers" in favor of the "honesty" of the "intellectual conscience." The latter refuses to accept the former, which seeks to exempt itself from rigorous scrutiny and refuses to enter the space

<sup>55</sup> Cf. HAH 484; BGE 210; WP 456, 459.

of questions and reasons, demonstration and proofs. It is precisely this that Nietzsche finds "contemptible" and which leads him to reject all claims regarding transcendent entities.

Yet, having sanctioned the "will to deception," how is Nietzsche to argue against this ignoble form of it? What differentiates this "bad" deception from the other "good" deception? If Nietzsche wants to accept the latter, must he not accept the former as well? Two related criteria distinguish these varieties of deception and justify Nietzsche's attitude toward them. Whereas moral-metaphysical deceptions are both unconditional and other-worldly, practical-vital deceptions are conditional and this-worldly. The former claim for themselves an absolute and ultimate status. As such, they plead exemption from scientific inquiry and affirm the existence of a prior science (a meta-physic) and a super-natural realm. Yet Nietzsche shows that these moral-metaphysical deceptions are not only explicable in scientific terms, but also that such explanation reveals them to be pernicious and contemptible. Drawing upon basic psychological insights, he argues that these deceptions are products of an irrational self-hatred, a hatred of "the world of nature, life, and history" (in all its sensuousness, physicality, conditionality, and contingency) on the part of a natural, living being: "fundamentally, life's nausea and disgust with life" (BT/SC 5). Posits such as "God," the "Forms," and the "thing-in-itself," he insists, are simply ideal projections that betray a human desire to be other-than-human, a desire for self-negation or annihilation.<sup>56</sup> Seen in this light, moral-metaphysical deceptions turn out to be not only *superfluous*, since they can be given an "internal" account, but also *deplorable*, since they deny the most palpable features of natural life in favor of indemonstrable claims, and since they rest upon psychological motives that are, by all accounts, odious.

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<sup>56</sup> Such arguments were, of course, a central feature of nineteenth-century German thought. Forms of this argument against religion had previously been put forward by Hegel and the Young Hegelians, particularly Feuerbach, Bauer, and Marx; and such a theory of projection was later further developed by Freud and his followers.

Practical-vital deceptions, on the other hand, are both conditional and worldly. These deceptions always justify themselves with regard to particular aims and goals that, in the final analysis, serve to increase the ability of human beings to preserve and/or enhance themselves as individuals, as groups, or as a species. In relation to other ends, or for other individuals, groups, or species, such deceptions might certainly be inadequate or counter-productive. And while, in our hubris, we sometimes forget the relative, conditional, and pragmatic origins and aims of these useful fictions, recognition of their fictional status does nothing to destroy their value. This, then, is a primary difference between the two sorts of deceptions: recognition of the fictional nature of metaphysical-moral deceptions destroys them, since absolute being and unconditional value is of their essence. The world in which we live, however, is contingent and conditional through and through. It countenances neither absolute entities nor absolute values. On the contrary, every entity in the natural world is enmeshed in a web of contingent relations and enjoys only a temporary existence. Such entities have limited, relative, and conditional horizons and posit for themselves limited, relative, and conditional goals. Such is "life"; and only those interpretations that affirm this conditionality, contingency, and relativity will affirm life. And it is precisely on this account that metaphysical-moral deceptions are found wanting, while practical-vital deceptions pass the test.

The "will to deception," then, is justified by Nietzsche only insofar as it places itself in the service of "life." This is also the case with the "will to truth." We have seen that Nietzsche rejects the "unconditional will to truth," which desires the eradication of every form of semblance and deception and thus ends up willing the eradication of "life"—since "life rest[s] upon semblance, [...] error, deception, simulation," etc. (GS 344). Any search for "the true world" betrays this other-worldly, anti-worldly desire, for it is nothing

other than a desire for the absolute, the unconditional, and the genuinely certain, which are not to be found within “the world of life, nature, and history.”<sup>57</sup>

It is precisely this “unconditional will to truth” that Nietzsche still finds in science, and that, despite his many affirmations of scientific method, is the crux of his frequent criticisms of science. These criticisms are particularly directed against positivism, which aims at a description of “the facts” without any distortion. According to Nietzsche, this remains a metaphysical desire; for, no less than Platonism or Christianity, positivism is still motivated by the demand for ultimate foundations and for a knowledge that excludes every form of semblance and deception.<sup>58</sup> At bottom, these two demands are the same, for, as the Cartesian project indicates, ultimate foundations are revealed only to a knowledge from which all possible deceptions have been systematically eliminated.

But this attempt to eliminate all perspective and interpretation in order to get at “the facts” is, once again, not only impossible but deplorable; for, in essence, it is nothing but a rejection of the world in which we live—a world in which all knowledge is necessarily perspectival, and, thus involves the kinds of “extramoral” deceptions discussed above. In a passage from the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche makes just this point. With philosophical and scientific positivism clearly in mind, he writes:

I know all this from too close up perhaps: that venerable philosopher's abstinence to which [unconditional faith in truth] commits one, that intellectual stoicism which ultimately refuses not only to affirm but also to deny, that *desire* to halt before the factual, the *factum brutum*, [...] through which French science [*Wissenschaft*] nowadays tries to establish a sort of moral superiority over German science; that general renunciation of all interpretation (of forcing, adjusting, abbreviating, omitting, padding, inventing, falsifying, and whatever else is of the *essence* of interpreting)—all this expresses, broadly speaking, as much ascetic virtue as any denial of sensuality (it is at bottom only a particular mode of this denial). That which constrains these men, however, this unconditional will to truth, is *faith in*

<sup>57</sup> See GS 344, 373; GM III 23-28.

<sup>58</sup> On positivism as the demand for ultimate foundations, see GS 347; on positivism as the demand for knowledge without distortion and deception, see GM III 24, cited below. For other critiques of positivism, see BGE 204, 210; WP 1 and 481.

*the ascetic ideal itself*, even if as an unconscious imperative—don't be deceived about that—it is the faith in a *metaphysical* value, the value of *truth in itself*, sanctioned and guaranteed by this ideal alone (it stands or falls with this ideal). There is, strictly speaking, no such "presuppositionless" science, the thought of such a thing is unthinkable, paralogical: a philosophy, a "faith," must always first be there to give science a direction, a meaning, a limit, a method, a *right* to exist. (Whoever has the opposite notion, whoever tries, for example, to place philosophy "on a strictly scientific basis," first needs to stand not only philosophy but also truth *on its head*—the grossest violation of decency possible in relation to two such venerable females!) (GM III 24).

In short, we must reject not only *a priori* but also empirical attempts to provide perspectiveless, ultimate foundations for our knowledge. Science, facts, and truth are possible only within the framework of one or another interpretation, each of which construes the world according to a set of presuppositions that receive only relative, conditional justification.<sup>59</sup> There is no such thing as absolute or unconditional truth.<sup>60</sup> Thus, as with "the will to deception," Nietzsche sanctions "the will to truth" only insofar as it acknowledges its conditionality and contingency—only, that is, insofar as it takes its place within the actual conditions of existence and inquiry of living beings.

### 1.5 The Revaluation of Truth II: Truth and the "Intellectual Conscience"

What, then, remains of "the will to truth," and what sort of "truth" does it "will"? The answer lies in Nietzsche's conception of "honesty" and "intellectual conscience." These terms, however, are easily misunderstood and their Nietzschean significance eludes a casual reading. Before laying out how these terms ought to be understood, then, I want to first show how they ought *not* to be understood.

#### 1.5.1 Utility, Correspondence, and the "Intellectual Conscience"

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<sup>59</sup> See WP 481: "Against positivism, which halts at phenomena—'There are only facts'—I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations."

<sup>60</sup> Through analyses of the "Preface" to *Beyond Good and Evil*, both Müller-Lauter (1990, 28ff) and Derrida (1978) make this point. Derrida more explicitly argues that truth, for Nietzsche, must take its place within the world of semblance.

In several passages in which Nietzsche speaks of "intellectual conscience," "intellectual integrity," and "honesty," he tells us that these philological virtues are characterized by "*the demand for certainty*" (GS 2) and the demand that everything be surrendered in the service of truth (A 50). This has led Walter Kaufmann, for instance, to argue that Nietzsche's consistent calls for "intellectual integrity" and the like manifest his rejection of the notion of truth as utility and his unwillingness to give up reason's desire for truth as correspondence, despite the recognition that this desire is destructive of life (1950, 359-61).<sup>61</sup> Arthur Danto, however, has taken issue with Kaufmann's view. Without offering an alternative account of the notions of "honesty" and "intellectual conscience," Danto argues that Nietzsche's discussions of the life-negating results of "the will to truth" provide sufficient evidence that Nietzsche does indeed relinquish the desire for truth as correspondence and instead sanctions useful fictions insofar as they are life-promoting (1965, 72, 99, 191ff).

This debate has become a centerpiece in the literature on Nietzsche, and each side has attracted a number of advocates.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, it has been suggested that, with regard to Nietzsche, "the distinction between correspondence truth and pragmatic truth [...] deserves to be called The Official Distinction" (Wilcox 1983, 72). Yet I want to argue that the debate is improperly framed, and that, contrary to both sides, Nietzsche identifies truth neither with utility nor with correspondence. A reconsideration of the passages concerning "honesty" and "intellectual conscience," I think, bears this out.

<sup>61</sup> Admittedly, Kaufmann makes no explicit reference to "the correspondence theory of truth." Yet something like it is clearly what he has in mind. For, according to Kaufmann, Nietzsche conceives of truth as a heroic resistance to every illusion and all considerations of utility or pleasure so as to be able to state simply what is the case. This is corroborated by Mary Warnock, who both expresses explicit agreement with Kaufmann's interpretation of Nietzsche's view of truth (1978, 57) and also explicitly argues that the conception of truth ultimately presupposed by Nietzsche is a correspondence theory (58 and *passim*). See the note below on "the correspondence theory of truth" and its relation to Nietzsche.

<sup>62</sup> See the note above concerning recent discussions of Nietzsche's texts on truth. An interesting variant of this debate can be seen in the exchange between Jean Granier (1966: 303-36) and Sarah Kofman (1970), discussed by Hoy (1981, 178-80) and Schrift (1990, 166-68).

Kaufmann is certainly correct to point out that, in these and other passages, Nietzsche argues against the notion that truth is equivalent to utility of belief. Indeed, he seems to argue that "intellectual integrity" consists precisely in a constant "doubt," "mistrust," and "skepticism" with regard to convictions, faiths, and beliefs, especially those one holds dearest.<sup>63</sup> Yet Nietzsche does not reject pragmatic criteria altogether. He simply claims that utility of belief is *insufficient* for the determination of truth, and that, *unchecked by other criteria*, the pragmatic criterion of truth quickly becomes dogmatic and deceptive.<sup>64</sup> When taken as the sole criterion of truth, the pragmatic conception easily accommodates the otherworldly agendas of metaphysics and morality. By establishing a domain that in principle excludes every other criterion, metaphysics and morality come to sanction beliefs solely because of the strength that accrues to them due to their benefit for the believer. Thus, in several passages that take up this issue, Nietzsche inveighs against Christianity and Kantianism, both of which hold that reason must ultimately yield to faith.<sup>65</sup> It is this that the "intellectual conscience" finds contemptible.

All these great enthusiasts and prodigies behave like our little females: they consider "beautiful sentiments" adequate arguments, regard a heaving bosom as the bellows of the deity, and conviction a *criterion* of truth. In the end, Kant tried, with "German" innocence, to give this corruption, this lack of any intellectual conscience, scientific status with his notion of "practical reason": he invented a special kind of reason for cases in which one need not bother with reason—that is, when morality, when the sublime command "thou shalt," raises its voice (A 12).

What does it mean, after all, to have *integrity* in matters of the spirit? That one is severe against one's heart, that one despises "beautiful sentiments," that one makes of every Yes and No a matter of conscience. Faith makes blessed: consequently it lies (A 50).

The strength and utility of a belief, then, cannot be the sole criterion of its truth. "Making unhappy and evil are no counterarguments," Nietzsche writes. "Something might

<sup>63</sup> See BGE 34, 39; GM I 1, III 24; A Preface, 12-13, 54.

<sup>64</sup> See GS 113; GM III 24; A 50; WP 456.

<sup>65</sup> See D Preface 3; GS 335; GM III 12; TI IV 2-3; A 10, 12, 50, 54.

be true, while being harmful and dangerous in the highest degree" (BGE 39). Those who accept the pragmatic criterion of truth, he concludes, show themselves to be "unaware of the most basic requirements of intellectual honesty" (A 12).<sup>66</sup>

But this is not to argue for a notion of truth as "correspondence with the way the world really is." In fact, oddly enough, Nietzsche argues that the correspondence conception of truth does not fundamentally differ from the pragmatic conception—that, like the latter, the former achieves its force by a "proof of strength." In §347 of *The Gay Science*, having ridiculed the pragmatic "proof of strength," Nietzsche goes on to argue that, no less than the pragmatic "believers," who deem their dearest beliefs "true," the "scientific-positivistic" "demand for certainty" is simply the strong belief "that something should be firm [...] the demand for a support, a prop [...] the *need* for a faith, a support, a backbone, something to fall back on," which is then deemed "actual," "real," and "true." That is, for Nietzsche, the conviction that there is some absolute foundation—that there are indisputable "facts," or some final "way that the world really is"—is nothing but a *need* that has been transformed into a *belief* or *faith*, which, because of its necessity and strength, comes to be considered *truth itself*.

Here, the sudden feeling of power that an idea arouses in its originator is everywhere counted proof of its *value*:—and since one knows no way of honoring an idea other than by calling it true, the first predicate with which it is honored is the predicate *true*. ... How otherwise could it be so effective? [...] if it were not real it could not be effective ... [...] An idea that such a decadent is unable to resist, to which he completely succumbs, is thus "proved" *to be true!!!* (WP 171)

Of course, nowhere in these or any other passages does Nietzsche directly mention the correspondence theory of truth.<sup>67</sup> Yet this realist conception of truth is clearly one of his

<sup>66</sup> Cf. WP 172: "That it does not matter whether a thing is true, but only what effect it produces—absolute lack of intellectual integrity. Everything is justified, lies, slander, the most shameless forgery."

<sup>67</sup> I note that, in a number of articles, John Wilcox has taken issue with both the very notion that there exists something called "the correspondence theory of truth" and the idea that Nietzsche acknowledges and makes use of this theory. See Wilcox (1980), (1983, 72-74),

targets. For he is arguing against the very notion that truth could be *found*, that the “true world” *is there* somewhere awaiting adequate representation by thought or language. It is this belief that motivates both the metaphysician and the positivistic scientist. But this belief betrays an “*instinct of weakness*,” a “*disease of the will*”(GS 347), since, for Nietzsche, truth is not something *given* that might be *found*, but something that must be perpetually *constructed* and *reconstructed*.<sup>68</sup>

(1986). Wilcox argues, first, that there does not seem to be any such thing as “*the correspondence theory of truth*.” “*Too many* philosophers have used the word ‘correspondence,’” he writes (1983, 73), and each of them has “construed that relation in different ways—indeed, to some extent they *had to*, since the relata were so different” (1986, 340). Secondly, he argues that “there is not much in Nietzsche’s writings that might plausibly be translated as ‘correspond’ or ‘correspondence’” (1986, 339). With regard to the first point, I grant that there is no single, canonical, and unequivocal formulation of “the correspondence theory of truth.” Nevertheless, the phrase still seems useful for designating realist theories which hold that a statement or belief is true if and only if it matches up with some antecedent, extralinguistic, extraconceptual reality, or a piece thereof. While I believe that such a view is incoherent, I think one can still find philosophers who hold it; and so the phrase allows one to distinguish such philosophers from those who hold other theories of truth, e.g., those according to which the criterion of truth lies in the consistency or coherence of beliefs or statements with one another or in the utility of belief. (Of course, such theories can themselves be realist, and thus, in the final analysis, “correspondence,” theories if they argue that coherence or utility is ultimately only an indice of a belief’s correspondence with a pre-given world). With regard to the second point, I note that Nietzsche does, at times, refer disparagingly to an older form of the “correspondence” theory of truth, namely the Scholastic notion of truth as an “adequation” between things and thought: *Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus* (see Prior 1967, 224). So, for instance, in “On Truth and Lies,” Nietzsche asks: “Are designations congruent with things? Is language the adequate expression of reality? [decken sich die Bezeichnungen und die Dinge? Ist die Sprache der adäquate Ausdruck aller Realitäten?]” (81, cf. 82) and concludes that “what would be called the adequate expression of the object in the subject [...] is a contradictory absurdity [das würde heißen der adäquate Ausdruck eines Objekts im Subjekt [...] ein widerspruchsvolles Unding]” (86). Similarly, in a note from 1887-88, he writes: “That a sort of adequate relationship subsists between subject and object [...] is a well-meant invention which, I think, has had its day [Dass zwischen Subjekt und Objekt eine Art adäquater Relation stattfinde [...] ist eine gutmütige Erfindung, die, wie ich denke, ihre Zeit gehabt hat]” (WP 474). This notion is somewhat more obliquely criticized in *The Gay Science*, where Nietzsche ridicules the scientific realist’s “faith in a world that is supposed to have its equivalent and measure [*Äquivalent und Maass*] in human thought and human valuations —a ‘world of truth’ that can be mastered completely and forever with the aid of our square little reason” (373). See also WP 625. Of course, Nietzsche never explicitly speaks of “the correspondence theory of truth,” or, for that matter, of “the pragmatic theory,” “the coherence theory” or any other theory of truth. But that does not mean that such theories cannot be attributed to him. Nietzsche characterizes truth in many different ways and on many different levels; and the attempt to sort out those ways and levels in terms of present-day terminology is, I think, of genuine heuristic value.

<sup>68</sup> See GS 58 and the discussion of it above. See also BGE 210. This notion is elaborated upon below.

Will to truth is a *making-firm*, a *making-true* and -durable [...]. Truth is therefore not something there, that might be found or discovered—but something that *is to be created* and that gives a name to a *process*, or rather to a will to overcome that has no end—introducing truth, as a *processus in infinitum*, an *active determining*—not a becoming-conscious of something that is “in itself” firm and determined (WP 552).

Those who hold that truth is “already there” waiting to be discovered simply prove to be too weary for this creative task. Instead of undertaking the difficult and endless task of constructing interpretations and campaigning for their truth, such realists put their faith in an established construction, which they take to be given in the nature of things:

Faith is always coveted most and needed most urgently where will is lacking; for will, as the affect of command, is the decisive sign of sovereignty and strength. In other words, the less one knows how to command, the more urgently one covets someone who commands—a god, prince, class, physician, father confessor, dogma, or party conscience. [...] Once a human being reaches the fundamental conviction that he *must* be commanded, he becomes “a believer” (GS 347).

The affect of *laziness* now takes the side of “truth” [...] it is more comfortable to obey than to *examine* ... it is more flattering to think “I possess the truth” than to see darkness all around one—above all: it is reassuring, it gives confidence, it alleviates life—it improves the *character*, to the extent that it *lessens mistrust*. “Peace of soul,” “a quiet conscience”: all inventions made possible by the presupposition that *truth has been found* [or: that *truth is there; daß die Wahrheit da ist*].—[...] This is the proof of strength (WP 452).<sup>69</sup>

The scientific realist, then, is just as much a “believer” as the pragmatist: both elevate their most strongly-held beliefs and desires to the status of “truth.” Indeed, lacking the self-consciousness of a more enlightened pragmatism, scientific realism shows itself to be the mirror-image of metaphysics and theology. It, too, is inspired by a need for foundations, for what is ultimately real; and it, too, claims to have found this true world.

In a section entitled “*‘Science’ as Prejudice*,” Nietzsche writes:

It is no different with the faith with which so many materialistic investigators of nature rest content nowadays, the faith in a world that is supposed to have its equivalent and its measure in human thought and

<sup>69</sup> Cf. WP 279.

human valuations—a “world of truth” that can be mastered completely and forever with the aid of our square little reason. [...] That the only justifiable interpretation of the world should be one in which *you* are justified because one can continue to work and do research scientifically in *your* sense [...]—an interpretation that permits counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more—that is a crudity and a naïveté, assuming that it is not a mental illness, an idiocy (GS 373).

Here, we see that what is objectionable about scientific realism, for Nietzsche, is precisely what is objectionable about unchecked pragmatism, metaphysics, and theology: namely, its *dogmatism*.<sup>70</sup> And what is objectionable about dogmatism, Nietzsche argues, is that it “castrates the intellect” (GM III 12).

The claim that *truth is found* [or: that *truth is there; daß die Wahrheit da sei*] and that ignorance and error are at an end is one of the most potent seductions there is. Supposing it is believed, then the will to examination, investigation, caution, experiment [*der Wille zur Prüfung, Forschung, Vorsicht, Versuchung*] is paralyzed: it can even count as sinful, namely as *doubt* concerning truth ... “Truth” is therefore more fateful than error and ignorance, because it cuts off the forces that work toward enlightenment and knowledge [*Aufklärung und Erkenntnis*] (WP 452).<sup>71</sup>

Dogmatism cuts off all further inquiry and questioning—and this the “intellectual conscience” cannot tolerate:

[T]o stand in the midst of this *rerum concordia discors* and of this whole marvelous uncertainty and many-sidedness of existence [*der ganzen wundervollen Ungewissheit und Vieldeutigkeit des Daseins*]<sup>72</sup> and not

<sup>70</sup> On the dogmatism of metaphysics and morality, see, e.g., A 9, 54.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. WP 457: “The words ‘conviction,’ ‘faith,’ the pride of martyrdom—these are the least favorable states for the advancement of knowledge.” On the “sinfulness,” “wickedness,” and “evil” of doubt, see also GS 4; BGE 212, 229-30; A 52; WP 457, 459. Cf. also HAH 630: “Conviction is the belief that on some particular point of knowledge one is in possession of the absolute [*unbedingten*] truth. This belief presupposes that absolute truths exist; likewise that perfect methods of attaining to them have been discovered; finally, that everyone who possesses convictions avails himself of these perfect methods. All three assertions demonstrate at once that the man of convictions is not the man of scientific thought; and HAH 483: “Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies.”

<sup>72</sup> Here Nietzsche uses the term *Vieldeutigkeit*, and, in GS 373, the term *vieldeutigen*, both of which Kaufmann renders as “rich ambiguity” and which I render, respectively, as “many-sidedness” and “many-sided.” Whereas, both in English and German, “ambiguity” often means “unclear” or “having a double-meaning” (*zweideutig, doppeldeutig*), my translation serves to emphasize both that Nietzsche speaks not of two (*zwei-, doppel-*) but of many (*viel-*), and that, unlike “ambiguity,” this sort of multiplicity does not seem to call for a resolution or clarification. Neither my translation nor Kaufmann’s, however, captures Nietzsche’s -*deutung* and -*deutigen*, which might be rendered “interpretation” and “interpretable,”

*question*, not tremble with the craving and the rapture of such questioning [...]—that is what I feel to be *contemptible* (GS 2).

Here Nietzsche hints at the most important reason why dogmatism is intolerable and why further inquiry is always necessary: that “the many-sidedness of existence” cannot be successfully captured within a single interpretive framework. Dogmatism is reductionist; and this reductionism, according to Nietzsche, is ascetic and anti-natural, since it denies the multiplicity, struggle, and change that is constantly manifested in the world of our experience.<sup>73</sup> (“Everything simple [*einfach*] is merely imaginary, is not ‘true,’” Nietzsche writes. “But whatever is real, whatever is true, is neither one [*Eins*] nor even reducible to one [*Eins*]” [WP 536]).<sup>74</sup> One ceases to be a genuine inquirer when one becomes a “fanatic,” whose inquiry is limited by “a sort of hypnotism of the whole system of the senses and the intellect for the benefit of an excessive nourishment (hypertrophy) of a single point of view” (GS 347).<sup>75</sup> Speaking again of the dogmatism of the natural scientists, Nietzsche writes:

What? Do we really want to permit existence to be degraded for us like this—reduced to a mere exercise for a calculator and an indoor diversion for mathematicians? Above all, one should not wish to divest existence of its many-sidedness [*seines vieldeutigen Charakters*]<sup>76</sup>: that is a dictate of good taste, gentlemen, the taste of reverence for everything that lies beyond your horizon (GS 373).<sup>77</sup>

He then continues, offering a simple case in point.

respectively. The point, then, is that existence, for Nietzsche, is not unclear or equivocal, but rather capable of supporting many different interpretations.

<sup>73</sup> See also WP 470, 600, 655, 881, 933.

<sup>74</sup> This text appears in the *Nachlaß* within a series of aphorisms entitled “Maxims of a Hyperborean.” It is immediately preceded by an aphorism that also appears in the “Maxims and Arrows” that begin *Twilight of the Idols*: “All truth is simple [*einfach*].”—Is that not doubly [*zwiefach*] a lie?” (TI I 4; cf. KSA 13, 478-9: 15 [118]).

<sup>75</sup> For more on this dogmatic reduction to a single perspective, see BGE Preface; A 9, 54.

<sup>76</sup> See note above on “Vieldeutigkeit.”

<sup>77</sup> Cf. D 370: “To what extent the thinker loves his enemy.—Never hold back or bury in silence that which can be thought against your thoughts! Give it praise! It is among the foremost requirements of honesty of thought. Every day you must conduct your campaign also against yourself. A victory and a conquered fortress are no longer your concern, your concern it truth—but your defeat is no longer your concern, either!”

Assuming that one estimated the value of a piece of music according to how much of it could be counted, calculated, and expressed in formulas: how absurd would such a "scientific" estimation of music be! What would one have comprehended, understood, grasped of it? Nothing, really nothing of what is "music" in it! (GS 373)

That the "exact sciences" are plainly irrelevant for an understanding of the aesthetic, historical, cultural, and social aspects of music, Nietzsche suggests, should make it clear that the world of our experience cannot be suitably explained through a single interpretive framework. Indeed, a consideration of such examples, Nietzsche feels, should even tempt us in the opposite direction: toward a recognition of the endless variety of interpretive possibilities.

I should think that today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner. Rather has the world become "infinite" for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that it may include infinite interpretations (GS 374).<sup>78</sup>

Nietzsche thus pledges "to take leave of all faith and every wish for certainty" (GS 347), to have done with "a will to truth [...] that ultimately prefer[s] even a handful of 'certainty' to a whole carload of beautiful possibilities" (BGE 10), and, leaving the land behind, to set out onto the dangerous, open seas of interpretation in search of a new kind of knowledge.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Alexander Nehamas (1983, 475ff) and David Hoy (1986, 24ff) have raised legitimate concerns about the claims of this section of *The Gay Science*. Nehamas focuses on the ways in which this section seems to sanction a sort of "species solipsism," insofar as "our corner" is meant to refer to "the human intellect" and the possibility of "infinite interpretations" to the possibility of "other kinds of intellects and perspectives" to which "the world" would appear fundamentally different. Hoy focuses on the ways in which this section seems to commit Nietzsche to a problematic metaphysical ontology about which Nietzsche claims knowledge while at the same time arguing that it is unavailable to us. These readings are persuasive and point to real problems in Nietzsche's formulation. However, as both Nehamas and Hoy go on to argue, Nietzsche elsewhere sanctions a different view of perspectivism, according to which there exist multiple, equally legitimate interpretive frameworks, each of which we have access to in principle, and none of which is reducible to another. While acknowledging the aforementioned problems, then, I cite a portion of the section above in support of this latter version of perspectivism.

<sup>79</sup> This theme is sounded in GS 124, 283, 289, 343; BGE 23

### 1.5.2 Dogmatism, Pluralism, Certainty, and "Intellectual Conscience"

The "intellectual conscience" thus consists neither in the will to truth as utility nor in the will to truth as correspondence. How, then, are we to characterize this elusive kernel of Nietzschean inquiry? We have already gone some way toward answering this question. We have discovered, for instance, that the "intellectual conscience" is relentlessly anti-dogmatic, anti-reductionist, anti-foundationalist, and ever in search of new interpretations. Given such a characterization, however, it appears to endorse a relativism that bears little resemblance to what we would normally consider "intellectual integrity" or concern for "truth." Yet Nietzsche aims to show that the actual conditions of our existence and the actual process of our inquiry necessitate such a view, and that such inquiry results in "truths" which, though never absolute or ultimate, deliver all that we actually need from truth and, in any case, all we can ever have of it.

In the famous "Preface" to *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche likens truth to a woman who refuses to allow herself to be won by any dogmatic suitor. This assessment of the dogmatist is reiterated in *The Antichrist*, where Nietzsche writes:

*Not to see many things, to be impartial at no point, to be party through and through, to have a strict and necessary perspective in all questions of value—this alone makes it possible for this kind of being to exist at all. But with this they are the opposite, the antagonists, of truthfulness—of truth (A 54).<sup>80</sup>*

Thus, it is precisely a concern for "truth" that inspires the vigilant anti-dogmatism and anti-reductionism of the "intellectual conscience." An examination of these negative traits, then, will perhaps give us a clearer sense of both the "intellectual conscience" and its "truth."

Indeed, Nietzsche primarily characterizes the "intellectual conscience" in such oppositional terms. Wherever the notion appears, we are told that it involves "mistrust,"

<sup>80</sup> Cf. BGE 43: "Are these coming philosophers new friends of truth? That is probable enough, for all philosophers so far have loved their truths. But they will certainly not be dogmatists." See also BT/SC 1, 5 for an argument to the effect that the dogmatism of science and morality is contrary to "truth" and "life."

"skepticism," "suspicion," "severity," "hardness," "evil," "scrutiny," "caution," and "questioning" with regard to all "faiths," "convictions," and "presuppositions."<sup>81</sup> Yet we should be clear this is not a call for "presuppositionless" inquiry; for, as we have seen, Nietzsche denies that any such thing is possible. "There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as science 'without presuppositions,'" he writes; "the thought of such a thing is unthinkable;" for "a philosophy, a 'faith,' must always first be there to give science a direction, a meaning, a limit, a method, a *right to exist*" (GM III 24).<sup>82</sup> Elsewhere he writes that "'contemplation without interest'" is "a nonsensical absurdity," since it demands "that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking" (GM III 12). Thus, Nietzsche concludes:

There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective "knowing"; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about a thing [*eine Sache*], the *more* eyes, different eyes we can use to observe a thing, the *more* complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be (GM III 12).

But here we witness an interesting transformation. Instead of the skeptical relativism that might seem to result from such a perspectival thesis, Nietzsche tells us that "knowledge" and "objectivity" are still possible, provided that we understand them differently. Rather than conceiving of "knowledge" and "objectivity" as "contemplation without interest," Nietzsche proposes that we understand them as

the ability to have one's For and Against *under control* and to engage and disengage them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge (GM III 12).

<sup>81</sup> See HAH 631, 633, 635; GS 2, 4, 113, 293, 319, 344, 346, 357; Z III 12; BGE 25, 34, 39, 209-10, 212, 230; GM III 24; A 12-13, 47, 50, 54; WP 452.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. GS 344.

With this, we begin to see the cognitive value of Nietzsche's interpretive pluralism. It is the role of the "intellectual conscience" to relentlessly question the "faiths," "convictions," and "presuppositions" of any particular evaluative or interpretive framework. Such questioning presupposes something against which to measure a particular interpretation. Without a presuppositionless standpoint, any particular interpretation can only be measured against other interpretations and perspectives.<sup>83</sup> A proliferation of such interpretations, then, will not only provide us with many different ways to construe the world, but will also give us multiple criteria against which to measure any particular interpretation.

In Nietzsche's usage, then, "honesty," "intellectual conscience," and "intellectual integrity" are not only *compatible* with the necessarily perspectival character of all knowledge; they even *require* such a condition.<sup>84</sup> They designate precisely a relationship *between* perspectives, namely the constant weighing and measuring of interpretations against one another—of existing interpretations against other existing interpretations, of new interpretations against old interpretations and old interpretations against new interpretations. Refusing to unquestioningly sanction the dominant interpretations, no matter how "useful" or "necessary" they appear to be, the "intellectual conscience" constantly asserts the "evil" instincts that question existing forms and experiment with new or forgotten ones.

The strongest and most evil spirits have so far done the most to advance humanity: again and again they have rekindled the passions that were going to sleep—all ordered society puts the passions to sleep—and *they reawakened again and again the sense of comparison, of contradiction, of*

<sup>83</sup> A similar sort of epistemological relativism has more recently been articulated by W.V. Quine, who, in his famous paper "Ontological Relativity," writes: "The relativistic thesis to which we have come is this, to repeat: it makes no sense to say what the objects of a theory are, beyond saying how to interpret or reinterpret that theory in another" (1969a, 50). This position has also been argued for by Goodman, e.g., (1960) and (1978), Putnam, e.g., (1977) and (1981, chap. 3), and Rorty, e.g., (1988b), differences between these philosophers notwithstanding.

<sup>84</sup> Thus, the "antinomy" Jean Granier (1966) sees in Nietzsche's commitment to both perspectivism and philological probity turns out to be no antinomy at all.

the pleasure in what is new, daring, untried; *they compelled man to pit opinion against opinion, model against model* (GS 4, my emphasis).<sup>85</sup>

This weighing and measuring of interpretations against one another serves a number of heuristic and critical purposes. First, it demonstrates the partiality of any particular interpretation or perspective. It thus prevents any interpretation from taking itself to be uniquely correct and opens it up to critique and scrutiny from without. Second, this procedure calls attention to the rules of formation of interpretations and the different sets of these that govern different interpretations, thus highlighting the decisions in favor of one or more of the many criteria that compete for satisfaction in the composition of any interpretation. Thus, entrenchment is weighed against innovation, habit against novelty, simplicity, coherence, utility, and explanatory power against comprehensiveness and precise description, etc. Third—and highly important for Nietzsche—a consideration of the dominant interpretations of an individual or group produces a whole symptomatology of the practical-vital dispositions and values that motivate these choices, revealing the affirmative or negative, healthy or sickly, active or reactive, noble or base states of being that underlie decisions in favor of metaphysics, theology, science, art, or any other major world-interpretation.<sup>86</sup> Finally, such recognition of the plurality of interpretations and their irreducibility to a single base reveals what Nietzsche calls “the whole marvelous uncertainty

<sup>85</sup> See also GS 34.

<sup>86</sup> It should be said that this procedure is, for Nietzsche, not a simple calculus but a complex symptomatology. Thus, for instance, while Plato is criticized for his hatred of becoming and semblance, he is praised for his “sharpened senses” and his “noble resistance to obvious sense evidence”; while Christianity is criticized for its repression of the active impulses, it is praised for its development of subtlety, depth, and cunning; while science is criticized for its residual metaphysics, it is praised for its development of skepticism, mistrust, and critical acumen; and while art and artists generally receive the highest praise from Nietzsche, he also argues that—in the case of Wagner, for instance—the artistic enterprise can be motivated by and can harbor the most objectionable metaphysical-moral dispositions and values. On this symptomatology, see Deleuze (1962, chap. 2), Nehamas (1985, 127ff), and Schrift (1990, 171ff).

and many-sidedness of existence" (GS 2), and thus affirms the world of becoming, change, and semblance.<sup>87</sup>

This construal of the "intellectual conscience" as an incessant weighing and measuring of interpretations against one another also allows us to account for Nietzsche's apparently contradictory remarks concerning "the demand for certainty." In *Gay Science* §2, Nietzsche writes that one who has intellectual integrity will "account *the desire for certainty* [Verlangen nach Gewissheit] as his inmost craving and deepest distress—as that which separates the higher human beings from the lower." Yet in §347 of the same text, he argues that "that impetuous *desire for certainty* [Verlangen nach Gewissheit] that today discharges itself in scientific-positivistic form" betrays an "*instinct of weakness*" and "*disease of the will*." There are clearly two different conceptions of "certainty" at work here. The latter type, as we have seen, consists in the desire for an indubitable ground, the desire for a final determination of "the way the world is." Such a desire is reprehensible, to Nietzsche, in that it wants to negate the necessarily perspectival character of all knowledge and the "many-sidedness of existence" in favor of some other-worldly standpoint and some simple, unchanging world. The former kind of "desire for certainty," however, is something else entirely. In §2, Nietzsche makes clear that he has in mind simply the requirement that, in coming to rest upon a particular interpretation, one have taken alternatives into account and have made explicit to oneself the reasons for, and consequences of, one's decision. In this sense, the will to "certainty" is directed against those who tolerate "slack feelings in [their] faith and judgments," those who do not "consider it contemptible to believe this or that and to live accordingly, without first having given themselves an account of the most certain reasons for and against" (GS 2).<sup>88</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Cf. GS 373; WP 600.

<sup>88</sup> See also BGE 5.

Against the blind acceptance of one's judgments and values, it asks that one scrutinize them to determine precisely why one holds on to them.<sup>89</sup> And such scrutiny, as we have seen, can only come from serious consideration of counter-interpretations. Rather than sanctioning the desire for truth as correspondence, then, the "desire for certainty" that Nietzsche considers so central to the "intellectual conscience" achieves its force only within an interpretive pluralism, which refuses to grant the ultimacy of any particular world-picture. It is not a demand that the world be rendered "the way it really is," but rather a demand for "honesty" regarding the presuppositions, inclusions, exclusions, aims, and goals that motivate any partial perspective.<sup>90</sup>

### 1.5.3 "Intellectual Conscience," Truth, and Method

<sup>89</sup> See GS 335. Cf. HAH 630. In his note to GS 347, Walter Kaufmann makes a similar point.

<sup>90</sup> Both Hoy (1981, 180) and Schrift (1990, 222) have noted, I think rightly, that Nietzsche's interpretive pluralism bears a certain resemblance to the "principle of proliferation" and "pluralistic methodology" more recently advocated by Feyerabend (1975). Yet both Hoy and Schrift go on to criticize Feyerabend's slogan, "anything goes," as endorsing a problematic relativism. It seems to me, however, that this misses the point of both Nietzsche's and Feyerabend's projects. First, the relativism or pluralism advocated by Nietzsche and Feyerabend is primarily *methodological* rather than *substantive*. (Feyerabend explicitly advocates the adoption of "a pluralistic methodology" (1975, 30).) That is, it does not claim that every particular interpretation is as good as any other, but rather that no interpretation is final and that every interpretation must be rigorously tested from the point of view of other interpretations (Feyerabend 1975, 30). While both Nietzsche and Feyerabend grant that there will always be more than one valid interpretation (i.e., in different domains, given different interests and goals, etc.), neither argues that every interpretation is valid. (Both, for instance, reject theological interpretations; and, while Feyerabend rejects anti-democratic interpretations, Nietzsche rejects democratic interpretations). Secondly, neither Nietzsche nor Feyerabend advocates relativism or anti-dogmatism for its own sake. Rather, for both, relativism and pluralism is endorsed because of its *heuristic* and *critical* value. (Feyerabend, for instance, puts interpretive pluralism in the service of "progress" [1975, 23 and passim] and "objective knowledge" [46]). I have argued above (and continue to argue below) that Nietzsche advocates a perspectival pluralism "*in the service of knowledge*" and "*objectivity*" (GM III 12). Such too is the aim of Feyerabend's pluralism. He writes: "Knowledge so conceived is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to the truth. It is rather an ever increasing *ocean of mutually incompatible (and perhaps even incommensurable) alternatives*, each single theory, each fairy tale, each myth that is part of the collection *forcing the others into greater articulation* [my italics] and all of them *contributing via this process of competition, to the development of our consciousness* [my italics] [...] *Variety of opinion is necessary for objective knowledge*" (1975, 30, 46).

We now have a better sense of what the “intellectual conscience” is, for Nietzsche. One important issue, however, remains outstanding. We know that the “intellectual conscience” is concerned with truth, but we still do not know precisely what truth is, for Nietzsche. To answer this question, I want to return a statement made above. At the outset of this discussion, I remarked that one commentator or another has attributed to Nietzsche every major theory of truth, while others have argued that Nietzsche neither provides nor is interested in providing any theory of truth at all. I went on to claim, without elaboration, that I think each of these views is, in some respect, correct. We are now in a position to see why this is so.

We have seen that Nietzsche rejects the notion that truth is simply utility of belief. Yet, clearly, Nietzsche does not reject pragmatic criteria entirely. There is no such thing as “contemplation without interest,” he claims; “to eliminate the will altogether” would be “to castrate the intellect” (GM III 12). That is to say, truth is relative to our interests and goals—not, perhaps, to any particular interest, but certainly to the interests of inquiry in general. Truth is the answer to our questions; it is what fulfills our epistemological projects and satisfies our will to know. The truth *matters* to us; it *makes a difference*. At least in part, it is that which allows us to predict or manage the world in which we find ourselves. That said, it is still not the case that every expedient belief must be counted as true. There remain truths that are useless, trivial, inexpedient, or even dangerous, and beliefs that might be useful but are nevertheless false.

Nietzsche’s attitude toward the criterion of coherence is similarly equivocal. While the coherence theory of truth does not figure explicitly in his texts, the criterion of coherence is nevertheless at work in Nietzsche’s discussions of epistemological issues. He notoriously rejects the notions of “facts-in-themselves” and “things-in-themselves,” arguing that there are “facts” and “things” only within the context of an interpretation or from the point of

view of a particular perspective.<sup>91</sup> That is to say, what is known is known only insofar as it is part of a system or epistemological framework; and what is true is so only insofar as it "coheres" with the other terms of that system or framework. Furthermore, Nietzsche often remarks that new discoveries necessarily take place against the background of our previous knowledge, and that they are accorded a place within our system of beliefs only once they have accommodated themselves to that system or once that system has modified itself to accommodate them.<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, Nietzsche argues that some interpretations (e.g., moral and metaphysical ones) are false regardless of their coherence or systematicity, while other highly systematic interpretations (e.g., those of logic and mathematics) are too skeletal and abstract to be considered unequivocally true. Furthermore, he argues that the previous knowledge that grounds our current system of beliefs is no final guarantor of truth, since systems of belief often include central tenets that are later shown to be false or founded on narrow prejudice.

Even with regard to the correspondence theory of truth Nietzsche's attitude is not unequivocal. He frequently rejects the notion that truth consists in the correspondence between thought or language and a pre-given world. There are no "bare facts," or "pre-given things," he argues; rather, there are "facts" only within the context of an interpretation. Still, however, one might justly say that, within a given interpretation, or relative to a particular description, one speaks truly when one speaks of the things and facts countenanced by that interpretation or description, and falsely when one speaks otherwise.<sup>93</sup> Thus, from the viewpoint of everyday, practical discourse, we have no

<sup>91</sup> See GM II 12, III 12, 24; WP 481, 553-69.

<sup>92</sup> See GS 57, 114, 355; BGE 230; TI VI 5; WP 499-501.

<sup>93</sup> Thus Nietzsche writes, in "On Truth and Lies," that, within the context of a system of valid designations, "the liar" is one who misuses fixed conventions by means of arbitrary substitutions or even reversals of names (81). Richard Schacht (1983, 60-71) discusses in further detail how Nietzsche seems to sanction this sort of internal, or "discourse-relative" correspondence conception of truth.

trouble judging the truth or falsity of a statement like "it is raining" by observing whether or not it is, in fact, raining.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, on a broader and more theoretical level, Nietzsche follows many contemporary philosophers in rejecting the correspondence theory of truth.

Nietzsche's equivocal attitude toward each of these major theories of truth is just the reason why I think some commentators have been right to argue that "Nietzsche is not ultimately interested in (theories of) truth" (Gemes 1992, 48).<sup>95</sup> In the end, neither utility, coherence, correspondence, nor any other single criterion serves, for Nietzsche, as the determinant of truth. Rather, the truth of a statement or belief is the more or less stable result of its having been relativized to a particular theory or interpretation which itself has been found viable according to at least some of the most rigorous criteria of justification available.<sup>96</sup> There are many such criteria, and no interpretation will fulfill all of them. Different criteria will be considered appropriate to different domains of inquiry; and competing interpretations within a particular domain will select different criteria as dominant. But neither these domains and interpretations nor these rules of inclusion and exclusion are fixed or final. Like everything else, for Nietzsche, truth *becomes*,<sup>97</sup> and this

<sup>94</sup> This conception of correspondence seems similar to that delineated within the semantic theory of truth, and perhaps accounts for some commentators' attribution of that theory to Nietzsche. See the note above concerning theories of truth and their attribution to Nietzsche.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Nehamas (1985, 55): "Nietzsche [...] is not interested in providing a theory of truth."

<sup>96</sup> Here, Nietzsche would agree with Richard Rorty, who writes that "there is nothing to be said about either truth or rationality apart from descriptions of the familiar procedures of justification which a given society—*ours*—uses in one or another area of inquiry" (1985, 23). Note that, while Rorty is perhaps the most prominent heir of the pragmatist tradition, he does not accept the pragmatic theory of truth. Rather, following Donald Davidson, he endorses a conception of truth that makes use of various aspects of the pragmatic, coherence, and correspondence theories, but which, ultimately, endorses none of these, preferring to consider truth the result of successful inquiry and interpretation rather than something that might be measured according to a single criterion. For a discussion of Rorty and Davidson on truth, see Davidson (1987). Cf. also Wheeler (1991).

<sup>97</sup> See HAH: "But everything has become: there are *no eternal facts*, just as there are no absolute truths. Consequently what is needed from now on is *historical philosophizing*, and with it the virtue of modesty."

becoming is a matter of struggle and power—not, as some have argued, a matter of what the strongest decree, or of what gives a particular individual the greatest feeling of power,<sup>98</sup> but of what rules of discourse and criteria of justification *prevail* or *hold sway* at a particular cultural and historical juncture.<sup>99</sup>

Nietzsche is not interested in providing a theory of truth, then, because truth is not something that admits of final determination by a fixed set of criteria. Truth is a battlefield, and there is no preordained or final victor. What Nietzsche *is* interested in, however, is ensuring that the struggle continue, and that inquiry not come to an end with the enforced peace of dogmatism. Toward that end, he seeks to multiply and sharpen the weapons to be used in this battle. Those weapons, Nietzsche tells us, are “methods.”<sup>100</sup> He writes:

Truth, that is to say, the scientific method, was grasped and promoted by those who divined in it a weapon of war—an instrument of *destruction* (WP 457).<sup>101</sup>

*[W]e ourselves, we free spirits, are nothing less than a “revaluation of all values,” an *incarnate* declaration of war and triumph over all the old conceptions of “true” and “untrue.” The most valuable insights are developed last; but the most valuable insights are the *methods*. All the methods, *all* the presuppositions of our current scientificity, were opposed for thousands of years with the most profound contempt. [...] We have had the whole pathos of mankind against us—their conception of what truth *ought* to be, of what the service of the truth *ought* to be: every “thou shalt” has hitherto been aimed against us. Our objectives, our practice, our quiet, cautious, mistrustful manner—all these were considered utterly unworthy and contemptible (A 13).<sup>102</sup>*

<sup>98</sup> See Grimm (1977, 17ff).

<sup>99</sup> See WP 552, cited above, and BGE 210.

<sup>100</sup> For more on this, see Jaspers (1935, 172ff).

<sup>101</sup> Cf. WP 455: “The methods of truth were not invented from motives of truth, but from motives of power, of wanting to be superior.” It should be said that Nietzsche goes on to say: “But that is a prejudice: a sign that truth is not involved at all” (WP 455). He thus seems to endorse a pure will to truth against the notion of truth as motivated by considerations of power. Yet this contradicts so many of his texts on truth (from OTL to GS 344 and GM III 23-28), which generally argue that the notion of “disinterested truth” is absurd and impossible. I suggest that what Nietzsche condemns is not the notion that the will to truth is a will to power, but that the obsession with power can make one a “fanatic,” and thus can “prolong [...] the dominion of anti-scientific methods.” See HAH 629-38 for Nietzsche’s affirmation of the “struggle” and “conflict” that drives the will to truth.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. WP 469.

All the presuppositions for a scholarly culture, all the scientific *methods*, were already there [in the ancient world]; the great, the incomparable art of reading well had already been established—that presupposition for the tradition of culture, for the unity of science [...] Everything *essential* had been found, so that the work could be begun: the methods, one must say it ten times, *are* what is essential, also what is most difficult, also what is for the longest time opposed by habits and laziness. What we today have again conquered with immeasurable self-mastery [...]—the free eye before reality, the cautious hand, patience and seriousness in the smallest matters, the whole *integrity* in knowledge—that had already been there once before! (A 59).

In these passages, Nietzsche lauds “scientific methods” and argues that they constitute a “declaration of war and triumph” against the faiths and convictions of metaphysics, theology, and morality.<sup>103</sup> This triumph, however, does not lie in their securing some truth that was covered-over by their adversaries, but in their “*integrity* in knowledge,” their attempt to satisfy all our cognitive demands. What is “essential” is not the *result* of scientific inquiry but its “*methods*,” which are praised for their “quiet, cautious, mistrustful manner,” for their scrutiny of faiths and convictions in the service of knowledge. Indeed, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche writes:

[T]he pathos that one *has* the truth now counts for very little in comparison with that other, gentler and less noisy pathos of *seeking* truth that never wearies of learning and examining anew [...] for the scientific spirit rests upon an insight into *method*, and if every method were lost all the *results* of science together would not suffice to prevent a restoration of superstition and nonsense (633, 635; my emphasis).

But this praise of “method,” then, is nothing but a reiteration of Nietzsche’s praise of the “intellectual conscience.” What is here called “method” is there called “interpretation.” But, here as well as there, Nietzsche advocates the production of a multiplicity of tests to determine the value of values and systems of belief.<sup>104</sup> Against the “habits and laziness”

<sup>103</sup> For more on this, see HAH 629-38.

<sup>104</sup> See HAH 637: “Opinions grow out of *passions*; *inertia of the spirit* lets them stiffen into *convictions*.— He, however, whose spirit is *free* and restlessly alive can prevent this stiffening through continual change [...] we advance from opinion to opinion, through one party after another, as noble *traitors* to all things that can in any way be betrayed—and yet we feel no sense of guilt.” Cf. GS 295.

manifested in the dogmatic notion that truth is simply to be found, Nietzsche argues that "the spirit of all severe, of all profoundly inclined, spirits teaches *the reverse*. At every step one has to *wrestle* for truth" (A 50, latter emphasis mine). Recalling his discussion of the Greek *agon*, which never allows or admits a final victor (HC), Nietzsche encourages a notion of inquiry as perpetual struggle, in which truth exists only as the fleeting calm between battles.<sup>105</sup> Thus, in a section from *Daybreak* entitled "*To what extent the thinker loves his enemy*," Nietzsche writes:

Never keep back or bury in silence that which can be thought against your thoughts! Give it praise! It is among the foremost requirements of honesty of thought. Every day you must conduct your campaign also against yourself. A victory and a conquered fortress are no longer your concern, your concern is truth—but your defeat is no longer your concern, either! (370).<sup>106</sup>

Finally, with this, we have perhaps also unravelled the aphorism that heads Nietzsche's examination of truth and the ascetic ideal in the *Genealogy of Morals*: "Unconcerned, mocking, violent—thus wisdom wants *us*: she is a woman and always loves only a warrior." Having spurned the dogmatist, truth and wisdom find their proper suitors in the warrior, who despises peace and settles for no final victory.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Or, as another writer has recently put it: "truth is the momentary balance of power in a many-sided war among various guerilla bands" (Wheeler 1991, 217). This Nietzschean conception of truth and inquiry as a perpetual "agonistics" has recently been advocated by Michel Foucault (1977a, 144 and passim) and Jean-François Lyotard (1979, 10 and passim). Without reference to martial metaphors, Jean-Luc Nancy offers another characterization of the point I want to make here. He writes that Nietzsche "turns this *Redlichkeit* into a strange probity that would in some way precede the truth of which is ought to be the guarantor or the witness, and which would precede or defer indefinitely the *reference* of its truthfulness" (1983: 72).

<sup>106</sup> Cf. GS 283, in which Nietzsche looks forward to an "age that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and that will wage wars for the sake of ideas and their consequences"; and GS 285, in which Nietzsche tells the post-metaphysical thinker: "You will never pray again, never adore again, never again rest in endless trust; you do not permit yourself to stop before any ultimate wisdom [...]; no resting place is open any longer to your heart, where it needs to find and no longer seek; you resist any ultimate peace; you will the eternal recurrence of war and peace." Cf. also HAH 638: "He who has attained only some degree of freedom of mind cannot feel other than as a wanderer on the earth—though not as a wanderer to a final destination: for this destination does not exist."

<sup>107</sup> See Z II 10 ("On War and Warriors").

### 1.6 Art as the Successor to Science

*An anti-metaphysical view of the world—yes, but an artistic one.*

—Nietzsche, *The Will To Power* §1048 (1885-86)<sup>108</sup>

We can now return to and complete Nietzsche's genealogy of Western thought. Where we left off, Nietzsche had described the self-overcoming of metaphysics and theology in science, and then the self-overcoming of science itself. This last event finally accomplished "the death of God," for it signalled the end of the metaphysical-theological conception of truth as an otherworldly ideal—as "divine"—and ushered in a "revaluation of truth." Yet, as I remarked above, if Nietzsche's genealogy is a story of sunrise and sunset, it is one that covers more than a single day. At the end of the metaphysical day, Nietzsche offers a forecast of the day to come. Having outlined the rudiments of Nietzsche's "revaluation of truth," we are now in a position to present that forecast, with which Nietzsche's genealogy ends.

Again, this genealogy is impelled by a constant process of self-overcoming, the gradual accumulation and exacerbation of tensions that eventually lead to a take-over by an element that had thus far been subordinate. The changes it describes are therefore not radical breaks but significant reconfigurations that nonetheless maintain much of the old order in the new.<sup>109</sup> Thus science comes into existence through a "translation and sublimation" of the

<sup>108</sup> This note appears in both the Kröner edition of *Der Wille zur Macht* and the Schlechta edition of Nietzsche's *Werke* (vol. III, p. 481), where it reads: "Eine antimetaphysische Weltbetrachtung—ja, aber eine artistische." Yet in the Colli-Montinari critical edition, the passage appears in a somewhat more ambiguous form and context: "Eine artistische Weltbetrachtung eine antimetaphysische—ja, aber eine artistische—eine pessimistische-buddhistische—eine skeptische—eine wissenschaftliche—nicht positiv(istische)" (KSA 12, 160: 2 [186]). Though it would thus seem to be inauthentic, the passage is cited here as it appears in *The Will to Power*, since it nonetheless serves as a convenient epigram for what follows.

<sup>109</sup> As Gilles Deleuze puts it, "a new force can only appear and appropriate an object by first of all putting on the mask of the forces which are already in possession of the object" (1962,

father confessor's demand for truth at any price;<sup>110</sup> and thus, too, does science's successor retain something of science itself.

Metaphysics and theology are overcome through an internal tension (the demand for faith vs. the requirement of truth-telling); and such, too, is the fate of science. As we have seen, Nietzsche criticizes science for its residual metaphysics—its refusal to question the absolute value of truth, and its attempt to discover a “true world” of “facts” that disregards all becoming, seeming, perspective, and interpretation. Yet, Nietzsche also praises science for its development of a contrary drive that ultimately clashes with and overwhelms the desire for unconditional truth. This triumphant drive manifests itself in science's relentless “mistrust,” “suspicion,” “scrutiny,” and “questioning” of all faiths, convictions, and presuppositions—a tendency that leads not to the valorization of presuppositionless inquiry, but to the proliferation of interpretations and “methods” with which to test any particular interpretation.

This movement is succinctly summarized in two texts from 1888. In an unpublished note, Nietzsche writes: “It is not the victory of science that distinguishes our nineteenth century, but the victory of scientific method over science” (WP 466); and, in *The Antichrist*, he writes: “The most valuable insights are discovered last; but the most valuable insights are the *methods*” (13). In other words, the greatest legacy of science is not its *ends or results*—its discovery of truths—but its *means or methods*—its questioning of all truths and its construction of alternative frameworks within which the world can be viewed differently.

Yet, ultimately, science is not the discourse that most fully endorses this project. Indeed, according to Nietzsche, a thoroughgoing movement in this direction would lead to

5). Deleuze refers to Nietzsche's discussion, in *Genealogy of Morals* III 10, of the way in which philosophy established itself only by taking into itself central features of religious asceticism.

<sup>110</sup> See GS 357 and GM III 27.

the self-overcoming of science and its passage into another discursive regimen—that of *art*.

Thus, in the *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche writes:

*Art*—to say it in advance, for I shall some day return to this subject at greater length—*art*, in which precisely the *lie* is sanctified and the *will to deception* has a good conscience, is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than is science: this was instinctively sensed by Plato, the greatest enemy of art Europe has yet produced. Plato *versus* Homer: that is the complete, the genuine antagonism—there the sincerest advocate of the “beyond,” the great slanderer of life; here the instinctive deifier, the *golden* nature (III 25).

Taken in the broadest sense, *art* (or, the aesthetic)<sup>111</sup> affirms everything to which Nietzsche's genealogy has directed us. Against the otherworldly claims of metaphysics and theology, *art* affirms this-worldly sensuousness and materiality. It counteracts the ascetic demand for desensualization and extirpation of the passions by indulging the senses and passions and encouraging their multiplication and refinement.<sup>112</sup> Yet, contrary to the scientific hypertrophy of the receptive faculties, *art* also affirms the active powers of creation and transformation. Within the aesthetic, discovery and creation go hand in hand: every act of sensation is also a construction of the world according to a particular perspective and interpretation.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, Nietzsche claims that a denial of perspective and

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<sup>111</sup> Despite an overly Hegelian emphasis on the significance of the aesthetic as forging a self-reflexive subjectivity, Mark Warren (1988, 179) rightly states that “Nietzsche understands art not as a set of artifacts and works, but rather as an archetype of practice; he is interested in the process more than the products.” To this one might add: more than the products and works of the artist, Nietzsche is interested in the artist's *values* and *affirmations*, specifically, the affirmation of appearance, perspective, and interpretation. This is what I focus on here.

<sup>112</sup> See WP 820: “In the main, I agree more with the artists than with any philosopher hitherto: they have not lost the scent of life, they have loved the things of ‘this world’—they have loved their senses. To strive for ‘desensualization’: that seems to me a misunderstanding or an illness or a cure, where it is not merely a hypocrisy or self-deception. I desire for myself and for all who live, *may* live, without being tormented by a puritanical conscience, an ever-greater spiritualization and multiplication of the senses; indeed, we should be grateful to the senses for their subtlety, plenitude and power and offer them in return the best we have in the way of spirit [...]: it is a sign that one has turned out well when, like Goethe, one clings with ever-greater pleasure and warmth to the ‘things of this world.’” See also WP 800, 809-10.

<sup>113</sup> See GS 57, 114; WP 500, 505, 520.

interpretation would mean the denial of sensuality itself, and, by extension, an ascetic denial of life.<sup>114</sup>

This brings us to what is perhaps most important about art for Nietzsche: its affirmation of appearance, semblance, perspective, and interpretation, and, consequently, its affirmation of life—"for all of life rests upon semblance, art, deception, points of view, and the necessity of perspectives and error" (BT/SC 5).<sup>115</sup> Once again, this is not an unqualified rejection of truth and reality in favor of falsehood and lies. Nietzsche's use of the terms "lie," "deception," and "error" is clearly polemical, directed against Platonists and positivists who search for absolute truth and for whom art is at best a diversion and at worst a seduction to untruth. Against this view, Nietzsche asserts that

there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspective estimates and appearances; and if, with the virtuous enthusiasm and clumsiness of some philosophers, one wanted to abolish the "apparent world" altogether—well, supposing *you* could do that, at least nothing would be left of your "truth" either. Indeed, what forces us at all to suppose that there is an essential opposition of "true" and "false"? Is it not sufficient to assume degrees of apparentness and, as it were, lighter and darker shadows and shades of appearance—different "values," to use the language of painters? (BGE 34).

The aesthetic analogy is important, here. Nietzsche points out that we are inextricably bound to perspective and interpretation, and that the world presents itself to us as a kaleidoscopic array of appearances. This is instinctively realized and affirmed by the artist, who acknowledges the impossibility of formulating the "many-sidedness of existence" within a single work and is content to construct reality from within a particular perspective and style, which inevitably requires a focus or emphasis on certain aspects and a de-emphasis or omission of others.<sup>116</sup> Such limitation, Nietzsche remarks, is necessary for any sort of creative activity.<sup>117</sup> Yet, while the artist acknowledges the necessity of

<sup>114</sup> See GM III 24.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. GS 54; BGE 2, 34.

<sup>116</sup> This and related aesthetic themes are nicely formulated by Nehamas (1985, chap. 2).

<sup>117</sup> See BGE 188.

limitation, she also recognizes it as a limitation; and this recognition serves as a further impetus to activity, spurring on the artist to further creation. Indeed, more so than any other discourse, the aesthetic prizes experimentation and innovation, and thus affirms change and becoming. In this way, too, art affirms life as an endless process of destruction and creation, becoming and overcoming. Moreover, though it is to some degree cumulative, this becoming is not teleological. The aesthetic shows little tolerance for absolute standards of style or interpretation, and does not seem to sanction the notion of progress as convergence toward a final or totalizing viewpoint.<sup>118</sup> The history of art countenances a multiplicity of different styles and interpretations, a few of which may be dominant at a particular moment, but none of which forever reigns supreme. It thus grants that there are "truths" but denies that there is any "Truth": "There are many kinds of eyes [...] and consequently there are many kinds of 'truths,' and consequently there is no Truth" (WP 540).

But Nietzsche is not interested in art for art's sake. His principle interest in art is philosophical. More specifically, he wants to encourage the development of a new type of philosopher: the artist-philosopher, an "artistic Socrates" (BT 14) who says yes to becoming, semblance, perspective, and interpretation, and sees these not as an impediment to inquiry but as an incitement to it.<sup>119</sup> Such a philosopher will find in "art [...] a necessary correlative of, and supplement for science" (BT 14), and will combine the scientist's relentless questioning and search for knowledge with the artist's affirmation of appearance and search for ever-new perspectives and interpretations. This will, of course, require a new conception of truth and knowledge; and the philosopher-artist will be able to

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<sup>118</sup> Nehamas notes that "the understanding of everything would be like a painting that incorporates all styles or is painted in no style at all—a true chimera, both impossible and monstrous" (1985, 51).

<sup>119</sup> This point was tirelessly argued by Walter Kaufmann. See, e.g., BT "Translator's Introduction" 3, Kaufmann (1950, 395), and Kaufmann's comments in de Man (1972, 48).

appear only after the “revaluation of truth,” which, we have seen, results in a conception of truth as relative to particular interpretive frameworks, and a conception of knowledge as the accumulation of a plurality of such interpretations under the administration of a practical wisdom which dispenses them appropriately.<sup>120</sup>

The new philosopher’s goal, then, is not the discovery of absolute truth, but the cultivation of a broad-based and flexible understanding through the incorporation and integration of a number of natural drives, some of them “scientific,” others “aesthetic.” The development of this scientific-aesthetic synthesis is nicely summarized in a passage entitled “*On the doctrine of poisons.*” Nietzsche writes:

So many things have to come together for scientific thinking to originate; and all these necessary strengths had to be invented, practiced, and cultivated separately. As long as they were still separate, however, they frequently had an altogether different effect than they do now that they are integrated into scientific thinking and hold each other in check. Their effect was that of poisons; for example, that of the impulse to doubt, to negate, to wait, to collect, to dissolve. Many hecatombs of human beings were sacrificed before these impulses learned to comprehend their coexistence and to feel that they were all functions of one organizing force within one human being. And even now the time seems remote when artistic energies and the practical wisdom of life will join with scientific thinking to form a higher organic system in relation to which scholars, physicians, artists, and legislators—as we know them at present—would have to look like paltry relics of ancient times (GS 113).

The development of this “synthetic human being” (WP 881, 883), Nietzsche suggests, is slow, and its realization still a long way off. Despite the accomplishment of “the death of God,” there remain many “shadows of God” (GS 108) that must still be “vanquished” before such a being and such a worldview can take root and flourish. This preparatory task Nietzsche makes his own; and it is to this that I turn in the following chapter.

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<sup>120</sup> This seems to me to be the main point of the highly important passage GM III 12, discussed briefly above and more fully in Chapter 4. Cf. BGE 212; WP 259 and 928.

## NATURALISM AND INTERPRETATION: NIETZSCHE'S CONCEPTION OF EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY

*We laugh as soon as we encounter the juxtaposition of "man and world," separated by the sublime presumption of the little word "and"!*

—Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §346.

In the previous chapter, I argued that Nietzsche's notorious claim, "God is dead," condenses an elaborate genealogy of Western thought, a sequence of world-views stretching from metaphysics and theology through science and art. The "recent event" of "God's death," I argued, marks a turning-point in that genealogy, ushering in a "revaluation" of all the "values" that have hitherto reigned supreme. Foremost among those values is the value of truth; and, thus, we saw that "God's death" immediately calls for a revaluation of truth. In this chapter, I want to continue this exploration of Nietzsche's "revaluation of values" as it concerns broader issues of epistemology and ontology.

We have seen that "the death of God" leads to a sort of *naturalism*,<sup>1</sup> that is, to a rejection of all other- or un-worldly frameworks and posits, and to a resituation of knowing and

<sup>1</sup> In contemporary philosophy, naturalism is often associated with scientism; and we have seen that Nietzsche is critical of science's ability to give a full account of human experience. This seems to be the reason for Heidegger's suggestion that the term "naturalism" poorly characterizes the project of Nietzsche's later philosophy (1937, 93-4). However, I argue that Nietzsche accepts a broadly scientific view of the world and only criticizes science for its residual theology, its claim to describe pure and unmediated "facts" about the world. I aim to show that Nietzsche's "de-deification of nature" leads to a rejection of this claim, and instead forces upon science a feature commonly associated with the aesthetic: the irreducibility of interpretation. Thus, as I suggested at the end of Chapter 1, Nietzsche holds that the naturalistic discourse *par excellence* would be one in which science and art were inextricably intertwined. For this reason, I support neither the aestheticist, anti-naturalist reading of Nietzsche offered by Allan Megill (1985, 29-35) nor the naturalist, anti-aestheticist reading offered by Brian Leiter (1992). For other discussions of Nietzsche's naturalism, see Kaufmann (1950, 102), Fink (1973, 206), Schacht (1985, 68-86), and Hoy (1988, 743-66).

being within “the world of life, nature, and history” (GS 344). In what follows, I will elaborate on this idea, showing that Nietzsche’s naturalism leads him to replace metaphysical and transcendental<sup>2</sup> explanatory principles and entities with a naturalized epistemology and ontology. Yet we will see that, rigorously pursued, naturalism demands a rejection of both the epistemological ideal of a “God’s-eye view” and the ontological ideal of a “pre-given world,” leading Nietzsche to a holistic or hermeneutic position that accepts the primacy and irreducibility of interpretation.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, I will argue that Nietzsche’s naturalism constrains the potential relativism of this position, allowing him to claim that some interpretations (namely naturalistic ones) are better than others. Indeed I suggest that Nietzsche’s conception of the world as “will to power” or an “innocent becoming” is an example of such an interpretation—one that cannot and does not claim to be uniquely correct, but which still has reasonable grounds for claiming to be better than rival interpretations.

I take my departure from §108 of *The Gay Science*, where Nietzsche first announces “the death of God” and the concomitant demand that all the remaining “shadows” of God be “vanquished.” He writes:

*New struggles.* — After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave—a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of humanity, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will still be shown.—And we—we still have to vanquish his shadow, too!

<sup>2</sup> Following Kant’s usage, I call “metaphysical” or “transcendent” those features that are dogmatically claimed to exist, though their existence cannot be empirically demonstrated; and I call “transcendental” those non-empirical features the existence of which is said to be established through a deduction that shows them to be the necessary conditions for the empirical.

<sup>3</sup> This distinguishes my construal of Nietzsche’s naturalism from the more realist version offered by Brian Leiter (1992). Leiter argues that, for Nietzsche, the natural, organic world is a “fact of the matter,” the ground and basis of all interpretation, and that the will to power is the most faithful, least distorting construal of this world. Contrary to this view, I argue that Nietzsche’s thoroughgoing naturalism leads him to reject such primitive “facts.” As I noted above, instead of rejecting aestheticism, as Leiter would have it, Nietzsche’s naturalism indeed demands a sort of aestheticism, though not, perhaps, of the Nehamasian sort Leiter criticizes.

In §109, Nietzsche informs us that the battle against these “shadows” must take place on two fronts, requiring both a “naturalization of humanity” and a “de-deification of nature.” Having rejected a host of theological world-views, Nietzsche rhetorically asks:

When will all these shadows of God cease to darken us? When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature? (GS 109).

I will argue that the “naturalization of humanity” foregrounds Nietzsche’s commitment to a thoroughgoing naturalism in epistemology and ontology, while the “de-deification of nature” foregrounds his commitment to the view that there is no “pre-given world” but only ever perspectives (or interpretations) and the entities internal to them.

## 2.1 The Naturalization of Humanity

### 2.1.1 *Naturalism versus Metaphysics*

“The death of God” leads to a devaluation of all super- or extra-natural posits and explanatory principles. In the wake of this “death,” Nietzsche calls for a revaluation of all those features of natural life previously maligned by theology: sensation, instinct, and affect; change, temporality, and history; contingency and conditionality; procreation, nutrition, growth, decay, and death; psychology, physiology, biology, and sociology; etc. Nietzsche’s attempt to “naturalize humanity” is guided by the conviction that these characteristics of “the world of life, nature, and history” can give us a full account of being, knowing, and valuing that does without the superfluous and mendacious claims of the super-natural.

As a philosophical program, this naturalism is directed against metaphysics (or first philosophy, or transcendental philosophy), which Nietzsche suspects of doing theology even when it forgoes explicit talk of God. A discourse is metaphysical, for Nietzsche, if it maintains a strict division between the natural (the empirical, affective, physical, apparent,

contingent, transitory, etc.) and the extra-natural (the rational, moral, mental, essential, necessary, eternal, etc.), and grants to the latter an ontological and epistemological superiority and priority. Hence, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche asserts that: "The fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is *the faith in opposite values*"(2). Moreover, he argues that metaphysics attempts to avoid any contamination of the extra-natural by the natural, and is thus led to the supposition that its two realms have entirely separate origins.

Almost all the problems of philosophy once again pose the same form of question as they did two thousand years ago: how can something originate out of its opposite, for example rationality in irrationality, the sentient in the dead, logic in unlogic, disinterested contemplation in covetous desire, living for others in egoism, truth in error? Metaphysical philosophy has hitherto surmounted this difficulty by denying that the one originates out of the other and assuming for the more highly valued thing a miraculous source in the very kernel and being of the "thing in itself" (HAH 1).

This line of thought is taken up again in the second section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, where Nietzsche parodies this dualism and its hierarchy:

"How could anything originate out of its opposite? for example, truth out of error? or the will to truth out of the will to deception? or selfless deeds out of selfishness? or the pure and sunlike gaze of the sage out of lust? Such origins are impossible; whoever dreams of them is a fool, indeed worse; the things of the highest value must have another, *peculiar* origin—they cannot be derived from this transitory, seductive, deceptive, paltry world, from this turmoil of delusion and lust. Rather from the lap of Being, the intransitory, the hidden god, the 'thing in itself'—*there* must be their basis, and nowhere else." This way of judging constitutes the typical prejudgment and prejudice which give away the metaphysicians of all ages.<sup>4</sup>

And in *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche continues this parody of metaphysical dualism, elaborating on its degradation of the "world of life, nature and history":

You ask me which of the philosophers' traits are really idiosyncrasies? For example, their lack of historical sense, their hatred of the very idea of becoming. They think that they show their respect for a subject when they de-historicize it, *sub specie aeterni*—when they turn it into a mummy. All that philosophers have handled for thousands of years have been concept-mummies; nothing real escaped their grasp alive. [...] Death, change, old age, as well as procreation and growth, are to their minds objections—even

<sup>4</sup> Cf. TI III 4.

refutations. Whatever is does not *become*; whatever becomes *is* not ... Now they all believe, desperately even, in what has being. But since they never grasp it, they search for reasons why it is kept from them. "There must be mere appearance [*Schein*], there must be some deception which prevents us from perceiving that which has being: where is the deceiver?—We have found him," they cry ecstatically; "it is the senses! These senses, which are so immoral in other ways too, deceive us concerning the *true* world. Moral: let us free ourselves from the deception of the senses, from becoming, from history, from lies;—history is nothing but faith in the senses, faith in lies. Moral: let us say No to all who have faith in the senses, to all the rest of humanity; they are all "plebs" [»Volk«]. Let us be philosophers! Let us be mummies! Let us represent monotono-theism by adopting the expression of a gravedigger! And above all, away with the *body*, this wretched *idée fixe* of the senses, disfigured by all the fallacies of logic, refuted, even impossible, although it is impudent enough to behave as if it were real!" (III 1).<sup>5</sup>

Against the indemonstrable and extravagant claims of metaphysics, which embroils itself in this host of dualisms and degrades the very world with which we are most intimately acquainted, Nietzsche argues that "conscience of *method*" (BGE 36) and "economy of principles" (BGE 13)<sup>6</sup> demand that we question these dualisms and attempt to provide an account of all phenomena on the basis of "this world, *our* world," "the world of life, nature, and history" (GS 344). That is, he seeks to explain both sides of the oppositions erected by metaphysics as manifestations of the contingent conditions of existence of natural beings. He comes to reject the metaphysical notion that there exist essential differences in kind, revealing instead that these represent nothing more than differences of degree within the natural. Thus, *Human, All Too Human* §1 continues:

Historical philosophy [...] which can no longer be separated from natural science, the youngest of all philosophical methods, has discovered in individual cases (and this will probably be the result in every case) that there are no opposites, except in the customary exaggeration of popular or metaphysical interpretations, and that a mistake in reasoning lies at the bottom of this antithesis: [... opposites] are only sublimations, in which a basic element seems almost to have dispersed and reveals itself only under

<sup>5</sup> Cf. HAH 2.

<sup>6</sup> This phrase appears within a discussion of the hypothesis of "will to power," but it applies equally well to Nietzsche's broader naturalistic project; for, as we shall see, the notion of will to power is, for Nietzsche, the naturalistic interpretation *par excellence*, one that envisions the natural domain as a continuum in which the inorganic, the organic, the animal, and the human represent merely differences of degree but not of kind.

the most painstaking observation. All we require, and what can be given us only now that the individual sciences have attained their present level, is a *chemistry* of the moral, religious and aesthetic conceptions and sensations, likewise of all the agitations we experience within ourselves in cultural and social intercourse, and indeed even when we are alone: what if chemistry would end up by revealing that in this domain too the most glorious colors are derived from base, indeed from despised materials?<sup>7</sup>

If the problem with metaphysics, then, is its other-worldly dualism, the solution, Nietzsche proposes, is a this-worldly anti-dualism. The means for realizing this solution lie in Nietzsche's "genealogical" method, which plays a double role: on the one hand, it criticizes "the highest concepts" (TI III 4) by offering counter-interpretations that reveal their probable *pudenda origo*; on the other hand, it constructs new interpretations that replace these metaphysical dualisms with a thoroughly naturalized ontology and epistemology. Rejecting the notion that there exist fundamental divisions between the natural world and humanity and between humanity and God, Nietzsche argues that the "death of God" serves to place human beings squarely within the natural world as creatures different in degree but not in kind from other natural creatures and entities. Rejecting the "peculiar" origins and functions of such features as reason, morality, logic, and language, Nietzsche instead

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<sup>7</sup> This critique of opposites and the dissolution of differences-in-kind into differences-of-degree is a central feature of Nietzsche's philosophy. He writes, e.g.: "between good and evil actions there is no difference in kind, but at the most of degree (HAH 107); "The general imprecise way of observing sees everywhere in nature opposites (as e.g., 'warm and cold') where there are only differences of degree" (WS 67); "Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type" (GS 109); "Cause and effect: such a duality probably never exists; in truth we are confronted by a continuum out of which we isolate a couple of pieces" (GS 112); "It might even be possible that what constitutes the value of these good and revered things is precisely that they are insidiously related, tied to, and involved with these wicked, seemingly opposite things—maybe even one with them in essence" (BGE 2); "'being conscious' is not in any decisive sense the *opposite* of what is instinctive" (BGE 3); "Even if language, here as elsewhere will not get over its awkwardness, and will continue to talk of opposites where there are only degrees and many subtleties of gradation" (BGE 24); "what forces us at all to suppose that there is an essential opposition of 'true' and 'false'? Is it not sufficient to assume degrees of apparentness" (BGE 34); "*Health* and *sickness* are not essentially different [...] In fact, there are only differences in degree between these two kinds of existence: the exaggeration, the disproportion, the nonharmony of the normal phenomena constitute the pathological state" (WP 47; cf. WP 812); "rest-motion, firm-loose: opposites that do not exist in themselves and that actually express only *variations in degree* that from a certain perspective appear to be opposites. There are no opposites: only from those of logic do we derive the concept of opposites—and falsely transfer it to things" (WP 552).

attempts to provide hypothetical, contingent, and pragmatic explanations of their origins and functions that draw upon the resources of physiology, psychology, history, sociology, philology, and evolutionary theory.

### 2.1.2 Nietzsche's Naturalized Ontology

To translate man back into nature, to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*; to see to it that the human being henceforth stands before human beings as even today, hardened in the discipline of science, he stands before the *rest* of nature, with intrepid Oedipus eyes and sealed Odysseus ears, deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping at him all too long, "you are more, you are higher, you are of a different origin"—that may be a strange and insane task, but it is a *task*—who would deny that? (BGE 230).

Nietzsche makes this task his own. He argues that with the repudiation of God (and the other-worldly in general) must come a repudiation of the metaphysical and theological notion that human beings are "higher" and "of a different origin" than the natural world. For Nietzsche, the human being "has become an *animal*, literally and without reservation and qualification, he who was according to his old faith, almost God ('child of God,' 'God-man')" (GM III 25). "We no longer derive the human from 'the spirit' or 'the deity,'" he writes, "we have placed him back among the animals" (A 14).

Such statements no doubt reveal the influence of Darwin. With the broad acceptance of evolutionary theory in the twentieth century, they seem uncontroversial and commonplace to us today. Yet Nietzsche goes further, attacking more persistent philosophical and scientific notions that, he feels, ought to go the way of creationism. Prominent among these is the notion that human beings possess something extra-natural (whether rationality, spirit, mind, consciousness, language, or morality) that sets them apart from, and places them above, other natural creatures. While granting that there is certainly some difference between humans and insects, for example, Nietzsche argues that this difference is one of

degree, not one of kind. On his view, the allegedly extra-natural features of human beings are simply “the means by which weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves—since they have been denied the chance to wage the battle for existence with horns or the sharp teeth of beasts of prey” (OTL, 80). Moreover, this sequence of degrees ought not to be conceived as charting a progress toward perfection. Against the progressivist assumptions of contemporary Darwinism, Nietzsche writes: “we oppose the vanity that would raise its head again here too—as if man had been the great hidden purpose of the evolution of animals. Man is by no means the crown of creation: every living being stands beside him on the same level of perfection” (A 14).<sup>8</sup>

Metaphysics has always conceived of human beings as standing mid-way between beast and God, as at once animal and rational, natural and super-natural. As natural beings, humans are said to be endowed with the animal capacities of sensation, perception, and desire; and it is by virtue of these capacities that they are contingently bound up with the rest of the natural world. Yet, as rational beings, humans are said to be endowed with the capacities for logical thought, language, and morality; and it is by virtue of these capacities that they confer necessity upon their actions and the world. Such capacities, it is said, allow human beings to, at least partially, extricate themselves from the contingencies of nature to exist in a rational world of freedom.

Against this conception, Nietzsche submits all the putatively transcendent or transcendental faculties and capacities to a deflationary critique. While detailed discussion of these critiques would take us too far afield, a general characterization should suffice for the project at hand: to reveal Nietzsche’s commitment to a thoroughly naturalized ontology.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. GS 115, where Nietzsche writes that one of the “four errors” of “man” is that “he placed himself in a false order of rank in relation to animals and nature.” Cf. also WP 684: “man as a species does not represent any progress compared with any other animal. The whole animal and vegetable kingdom does not evolve from the lower to the higher—but all at the same time, in utter disorder, over and against each other.”

Against the description of human beings as split between reason and nature, mind and body, consciousness and instinct, Nietzsche argues that the former terms are explicable on the basis of the latter. He writes that, “‘being conscious’ is not in any decisive sense the *opposite* of what is instinctive” (BGE 3), but rather “is actually nothing but a *certain behavior of the instincts toward one another*” (GS 333), that “thinking is merely a relation of [...] drives to each other” (BGE 36), and that “reason” is “rather a system of relations between various passions and desires” (WP 387). Elsewhere, he writes: “body am I entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body” (Z I 4),<sup>9</sup> and “the ‘pure spirit’ is a pure stupidity; if we subtract the nervous system and the senses—the ‘mortal shroud’—*then we miscalculate*—that is all!” (A 14).<sup>10</sup>

These terse formulations condense a theory of consciousness as simply an extension of bodily instinct, impulse, passion, and desire.<sup>11</sup> According to Nietzsche, consciousness is not that which directs the body and its instincts, but only a residuum of the body’s instinctual processes. He conceives of the body as a host of competing instincts, drives, desires, and passions in which some form an alliance through which they come to dominate, control, and subordinate the others. In “higher creatures,” the result of this struggle “enters consciousness,” which provides a vastly simplified picture of the myriad “unconscious” instinctual processes, and allows these creatures to perceive themselves as a unity.<sup>12</sup> This supplemental consciousness has a specific evolutionary function: Nietzsche writes, “*consciousness has developed only under the pressure of the need for*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. BGE 230: “actually ‘the spirit’ is relatively most similar to a stomach.”

<sup>10</sup> Cf. WP 526: “there is no ground whatsoever for ascribing to spirit the properties of organization and systematization. The nervous system has a much more extensive domain; the world of consciousness is added to it. Consciousness plays no role in the total process of adaptation and systematization.”

<sup>11</sup> This theory can be gleaned from such texts and passages as OTL, GS Preface 2, 111, 333, 354, BGE 19, Z I 4, A 14, WP 504-5, 523-30. In Chapter 4, I discuss in further detail Nietzsche’s theory of affects and the body.

<sup>12</sup> See GS 333: “the greater part of our spirit’s activity remains unconscious and unfelt.” Cf. also GS 354.

*communication*" (GS 354).<sup>13</sup> That is, the result of the instinctual struggle enters consciousness only insofar as the human being, "the most endangered animal," needs to be able to express her condition to others, to make her needs felt, so as to make others sympathize and come to her aid. "The development of language and the development of consciousness," then "go hand and hand." In brief, for Nietzsche, consciousness and language do not set human beings apart from nature, but have developed merely as tools aiding a particular natural creature that is otherwise poorly endowed.

Hence, "rational animals," on Nietzsche's view, turn out to be simply animals with certain capacities and not others. But Nietzsche goes even further than this. His suspicion of metaphysical dualism leads him to suspect that the same prejudice that separates the rational from the non-rational also separates the organic from the inorganic; and so he comes to wonder whether there is any essential difference between these latter. Indeed, in the same passage in which he first calls for a naturalization of humanity, Nietzsche suggests that "the organic" is simply a "derivative, late, rare, accidental" extension of the inorganic, and concludes that we must "beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type" (GS 109).

This view foreshadows Nietzsche's bold and often misunderstood supposition that all natural entities, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral, are "'will to power' and nothing besides" (BGE 36).<sup>14</sup> Generalizing from his theory of the body as a complex of drives and affects, each of which seeks to dominate and assimilate the others, Nietzsche decides "to make the experiment and to ask the question whether [our world of desires and passions] would not be *sufficient* for also understanding on the basis of this kind of thing the so-called mechanistic (or 'material') world." "In the end," he concludes, "not only is it

<sup>13</sup> Cf. BGE 268.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. WP 1067, written approximately a year after the above-cited passage.

permitted to make this experiment; the conscience of *method* demands" that we "determine all efficient force univocally as—*will to power*."

This is not the place to explore in depth this difficult and enigmatic doctrine. We can, however, indicate how this theory is developed as an attempt to construct a naturalized ontology that accepts no essential differences of kind. Seen in this light, the doctrine of will to power is not an *a priori* account of the universe as a whole, but rather an empirical hypothesis that pushes to its limits Nietzsche's rejection of the metaphysician's "*faith in opposite values*." The doctrine becomes less mysterious once we consider it as incorporating and extending certain basic scientific insights. Chemistry, for example, shows us that every known entity is simply a certain combination and arrangement of a limited number of materials and forces. Organic chemistry teaches us that the organic differs from the inorganic only by the presence of carbon compounds. Chemical analysis of both inorganic and organic matter also reveals that some compounds are more stable than others, that certain forces or the presence of particular materials can cause these compounds to break up and form new compounds, and that, in the course of these reactions, these elements and compounds are attracted to some other elements and compounds and repelled by still others. Nietzsche suggests that there is no fundamental difference between these sorts of chemical reactions and the biological phenomena of procreation, growth, and extension of influence that we witness from the level of the protoplasm to that of the human being. Reversing the direction of this analysis, Nietzsche suggests that the human activity of "interpretation" (which, he argues, involves assimilating, adapting, taking over, transforming, subduing, forcing, adjusting, abbreviating, omitting, padding, inventing, and falsifying)<sup>15</sup> is discernable throughout the natural world, from the scholarly activities

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<sup>15</sup> This catalogue is culled from two important later texts on "interpretation," GM II 12 and III 24. Cf. also BGE 230, which attributes these operations to "everything that lives, grows, and multiplies."

of human beings to the nutritive and procreative activities of the amoeba and the actions and reactions of inorganic chemical compounds.

Thus, despite significant differences between these various levels and kinds of activity, Nietzsche comes to construe the natural world, via the doctrine of will to power, as a continuum with many differentiations but no radical breaks. Gone are the “God-like” capacities that served to separate human beings from animals, and the miraculous *pneuma* that brought dead matter to life. Instead, Nietzsche argues for a thoroughly naturalized ontology, which explains all entities on a single model, as assemblages of “dynamic quanta,” the incessant change and transformation of which is the result of successful and unsuccessful attempts by each assemblage to extend its control over environing assemblages.

### 2.1.3 Nietzsche's Naturalized Epistemology

No less does Nietzsche attempt to naturalize epistemology.<sup>16</sup> Against metaphysical accounts that claim to reveal the indubitable, extra-natural, and extra-empirical conceptual foundations for knowledge and experience, Nietzsche offers an alternative account that explains from within “the world of life, nature, and history” the origins and functions of these alleged transcendent or transcendental foundations. This account turns out to be, broadly speaking, evolutionary—or, in more Nietzschean terms, “genealogical.”

As we have seen, Nietzsche accepts the basic tenets of evolutionary theory, rejecting only the progressivist, teleological assumptions that construe the course of evolution as a

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<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche's naturalized epistemology has also recently been discussed by George Stack (1991) and (1992). Yet, I disagree with Stack that Nietzsche's evolutionary version of Kant's transcendental deduction commits Nietzsche to a Kantian skepticism or agnosticism. For Nietzsche makes clear that what such tools of knowledge as language, logic, and the categories “falsify” is not an unknowable world in itself, but rather a realm of experience that is available to us through science (see, e.g., HAH 16, 18, 19, GS 110, 112) and the senses (see, e.g., TI III 2). I discuss this idea in section 2.1.4, below.

process of development resulting in the survival of the most perfect individuals and species. Genealogy dispenses with these assumptions and instead considers evolution to be a continual struggle for power, the movement of which is not a steady climb along an ascending line but a series of irregular displacements within a field of force.

[T]he entire history of a "thing," an organ, a custom [...] is] a continual sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another but, on the contrary, in some cases succeed and alternate with one another in purely chance fashion. The "evolution" of a thing, a custom, an organ, is by no means its *progressus* toward a goal, even less a logical *progressus* by the shortest route and with the smallest expenditure of force—but a succession of more or less profound, more or less mutually independent processes of subduing, plus the resistances they encounter, the attempts at transformation for the purpose of defense and reaction, and the results of successful counteractions (GM II 12).<sup>17</sup>

The "evolution" of knowledge and its faculties, according to Nietzsche, is no different. The framework of our knowledge has no extra-empirical or extra-natural source; nor is the development of our cognitive faculties evidence of progress toward perfection. Rather, these faculties and capacities are only chance endowments that have aided human beings in their struggles with other natural creatures and forces.

Genealogical accounts of this sort can be found throughout the Nietzschean corpus.<sup>18</sup> The early essay "On Truth and Lies in an Nonmoral Sense," for example, explains the origin of the human conceptual and linguistic apparatus as the attempt of physically ill-equipped creatures to secure their survival by controlling the environment through cunning and strategic alliance. Bombarded by sensory stimuli, Nietzsche explains, the human intellect learns to select a set of these salient to its survival and to encourage a forgetting of the rest. Toward the same end, these feeble creatures form herds and develop language as

<sup>17</sup> For more on Nietzsche's own evolutionary model, see: OTL, UM II 9 and passim, BGE 13, 262, GM I 1-4, II 12-13, A 4, WP 90, 647-50, 684-5. Also, see Hoy (1988, 745-51), and George J. Stack (1991) and (1992).

<sup>18</sup> A sampling of such texts would include: OTL, HAH Part I, GS 110-12, 344, 354-55, BGE 268, TI III and VI, WP 466-617.

"a uniformly valid and binding designation [...] for things" that serves "to banish from [their] world at least the most flagrant *bellum omni contra omnes*" (OTL 81).

This naturalistic story also accounts for the origin of metaphysics. It explains the evolutionary benefit involved in the move from sensation to concept and concept to word, showing that the conceptual and linguistic framework provides human beings with a theory of nature that simplifies and codifies their sensuous experience so as to make it manageable, predictable, and communicable. Yet Nietzsche argues that the *evolutionary* primacy of the repression or demotion of a whole range of experiences, along with the promotion of a simplified and stable world, comes to be transmuted into a *metaphysical* primacy; that the *pragmatic* "necessity" of this late-born conceptual and linguistic framework gets taken for a stronger, *metaphysical* necessity given in the structure of the world.

This awakens the [Platonic] idea that, in addition to leaves, there exists in nature the "leaf": the original model according to which all the leaves were perhaps woven, sketched, colored, curled, and painted—but by incompetent hands, so that no specimen has turned out to be a correct, trustworthy, and faithful likeness of the original (83).

Or, in a more critical moment, this *a posteriori* "necessity" awakens the (Kantian) idea that the conceptual and linguistic apparatus must be more than merely contingent, that it must be *a priori*, given in the structure of the human mind "— as though the world's axis turned within it" (79).<sup>19</sup>

Against these "arrogant" and "mendacious" suppositions, Nietzsche suggests that "the human intellect [...] has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life" (79), that it is merely a device for securing human survival. Moreover, it is only a means for securing *a particular sort* of human life. Thus, alongside the "rational man" Nietzsche imagines the "intuitive man" who (though he lives a more precarious and uncertain

<sup>19</sup> Cf. HAH 2, where Nietzsche criticizes philosophers for supposing "that the whole world is spun out of this faculty of cognition."

existence) sees the world as "eternally new" and constantly reveals the contingent, conditional, pragmatic, and sensuous origins of the conceptual edifice reified and elevated by his more conservative and secure opponent (OTL 89-91).<sup>20</sup>

This naturalistic account of the development of our cognitive faculties is expanded in Part 1 of *Human, All Too Human*, the first section of which, we have seen, urges the replacement of "metaphysical philosophy" with "historical philosophy." "Lack of historical sense," Nietzsche writes, "is the family failing of all philosophers" (2). With Kantian transcendental philosophy clearly in mind, he explains that philosophers

take the most recent manifestation of man [...] as the fixed form from which one has to start out. They will not learn that man has become, that the faculty of cognition [*das Erkenntnissvermögen*] has become; while some of them would have it that the whole world is spun out of this faculty of cognition (2).

Continuing this critique several sections later, Nietzsche writes:

Philosophers are accustomed to station themselves before life and experience—before that which they call the world of appearance—as before a painting that has been unrolled once and for all and unchangeably depicts the same scene: this scene, they believe, has to be correctly interpreted, so as to draw a conclusion as to the nature of the being that produced the picture: that is to say, as to the nature of the thing in itself (16).

Yet this is to

overlook the possibility that this painting—that which we humans call life and experience—has gradually *become*, is indeed still fully in course of *becoming*, and should thus not be regarded as a fixed object on the basis of which a conclusion as to the nature of its originator [...] may either be drawn or pronounced undrawable.

<sup>20</sup> This praise of the fleeting exceptions appears throughout Nietzsche's work. A characteristic passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, runs: "The human beings who are more similar, more ordinary, have had, and always have, an advantage; those more select, subtle, strange, and difficult to understand, easily remain alone, succumb to accidents, being isolated, and rarely propagate. One must invoke tremendous counter-forces in order to cross this natural, all too natural *progressus in simile*, the continual development of man toward the similar, ordinary, average, herdlike—common!" (268). Similarly, in a note from 1888, Nietzsche laments "the elimination of the lucky strokes, the uselessness of the more highly developed types, the inevitable dominion of the average," and remarks that "strange though it may sound, one always has to defend the strong against the weak" (WP 685). Cf. also UM II 9, Z (on "the last men"), BGE 269, GM I 8-9, WP 684.

Against this sort of transcendental account of human experience and the cognitive faculties, Nietzsche advocates the development of “*a history of the genesis of thought*” (16), which would replace “metaphysical explanations” with “physical and historical explanations” (17), those having to do with “the physiology and history of the evolution of organisms and concepts” (10).<sup>21</sup>

Putting this methodological recommendation into practice, Nietzsche proceeds to a task that would occupy him throughout his career: that of providing naturalistic, evolutionary explanations for the existence and operation of all the so-called “transcendental” forms of human knowledge: language, logic, mathematics, and the “categories of reason.”<sup>22</sup> This is not the place for an extensive examination of these critiques, which, though frequent, are often tersely formulated and thus call for careful explication. An overview, however, should suffice to give a sense of their role in Nietzsche’s more general project of developing a naturalized epistemology.

One notices at the outset that Nietzsche often blurs the lines of distinction between the operations of language, logic, mathematics, and the categories. This is because he sees them as thoroughly bound up with one another and serving, in slightly different ways, the same basic evolutionary role. All four are functions of consciousness (which we have seen to be a late-born and superficial extension of the sensuous, affective animal); and as such, each of these forms serves to simplify and schematize the sensuous manifold into a calculable and communicable system. Logic and mathematics are said to have the basic role of equalization: the reduction of sensuous differences and similarities to cognitive

<sup>21</sup> Cf. GS 354, where Nietzsche argues that “the problem of consciousness” is now explicable via “physiology and the history of animals.”

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche’s language, here, is imprecise. At times, he refers individually to the various categories (causality, substance, etc.), while at other times he simply uses the general notion of the “concepts,” “categories of reason,” or “presuppositions of reason.” In each of these instances, however, Nietzsche seems to have in mind something like the Kantian *a priori* concepts or categories of the understanding.

identities.<sup>23</sup> The categories are said to have the role of individuating the sensuous manifold and subsuming it under a few cognitive forms.<sup>24</sup> Finally, language is said to make manifest this simplified and schematized cognitive world.<sup>25</sup> Words, Nietzsche writes, unify groups of sensations and apply to these groups general designations that allow quick and abbreviated reference.<sup>26</sup> Grammar serves the equalizing function through the copula "is," and reverses the genetic sequence by placing the conceptual and logical abstractions ("subjects," "substances," "causes") syntactically before the different manifestations ("actions," "accidents," "effects") from which they are, in actuality, derived.<sup>27</sup>

From his earliest to his latest writings, Nietzsche does not hesitate to specify the determined place that these "transcendental" forms have within the overall conditions of human life.<sup>28</sup> As with consciousness, of which they are a function, Nietzsche characterizes logic, language, and the categories of reason as simply "the means by which weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves—since they have been denied the chance to wage the battle for existence with horns or with the sharp teeth of beasts of prey" (OTL 80).<sup>29</sup> He assures us that they are entirely contingent, stemming from "the earthly kingdom of desires" (WP 509) rather than from some inherent and necessary faculty or other non-empirical source. "All our *categories-of-reason* are of sensual origin: derived from the empirical world" (WP 488), he writes. Elsewhere he argues that:

<sup>23</sup> On logic, see HAH 18, GS 111, TI III 3, WP 508-22, 554; on mathematics, see HAH 11, 19, GS 112, 355, TI III 3, WP 516, 530, 554.

<sup>24</sup> See OTL 83, GS 110, 112, TI III, VI.

<sup>25</sup> See GS 354 and BGE 268.

<sup>26</sup> See OTL 83, BGE 268.

<sup>27</sup> See BGE 17, GM I 13, and TI III.

<sup>28</sup> We find such empirical deductions of logic and language throughout Nietzsche's work, and with a remarkable consistency of argument. From "On Truth and Lie" through Book Five of *The Gay Science* (e.g. 354) and *The Will to Power* notes (e.g. 508-22), Nietzsche's genealogies of logic and language are almost identical.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. GS 354.

The inventive force that invented categories labored in the service of our needs, namely of our need for security, for quick understanding on the basis of signs and sounds, for the means of abbreviation:—"substance," "subject," "object," "being," "becoming" have nothing to do with metaphysical truths (WP 513).

In the formation of reason, logic, the categories, it was need that was authoritative: the need, not to "know," but to subsume, to schematize for the purposes of calculation ... the development of reason is adjustment, invention, with the aim of making similar, equal—the same process that every sense impression goes through! Here, there was no pre-existing "idea" at work, but rather the utilitarian fact [*die Nützlichkeit*] that only when we see things coarsely and made equal do they become calculable and usable to us [...] life miscarries with any other kinds of reason, to which there is a continual impulse—it becomes difficult to survey—too unequal—(WP 515)

As we have seen with regard to consciousness in general, logic and language deal only in superficialities and superfluities and do not evidence any deep, rational core. Our categories, logic, and language, and eventually our senses, "merely glide over the surface of things and see 'forms' [...] We obtain the concept, as we do the form, by overlooking what is individual and actual; whereas nature is acquainted with no forms and no concepts, and likewise with no species" (OTL 82, 83).

Every word instantly becomes a concept precisely insofar as it is not supposed to serve as a reminder of the unique and entirely individual original experience to which it owes its origin; but rather, a word becomes a concept precisely insofar as it simultaneously has to fit countless more or less similar cases—which means, purely and simply, cases which are never equal and thus altogether unequal. Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things. Just as it is certain that one leaf is never totally the same as another, so it is certain that the concept of "leaf" is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the distinguishing aspects (OTL 83).

Logic is said to arise due to the same practical necessity of overlooking particulars or reducing them to generalities and identities.

Logic is bound to the condition: *assume there are identical cases*. In fact, to make possible logical thinking and inferences, this condition *must* first be treated fictitiously as fulfilled (WP 512).

On the *origin of logic*. The fundamental inclination *to posit as equal, to see things as equal* [...] This whole process corresponds exactly to that

external, mechanical process (which is its symbol) by which *protoplasm* makes what it appropriates equal to itself and fits it into its own forms and files (WP 510).<sup>30</sup>

This last analogy is important. Having externalized logic and language—showing them as trading in superficialities rather than exhibiting some deep structure of thought—Nietzsche here makes the further claim that the seemingly immaterial operations of logic are really no different in kind from such a basely physical and material process as ingestion, the incorporation and conversion of matter into a form that is useable for a particular body's nourishment and sustenance. Elaborating on this analogy in another note, Nietzsche claims that it is not some special *a priori* determination that governs the categorization of our sense impressions, but rather simply the historical imbeddedness of a primeval physiological need:

The same equalizing and ordering force that rules in the idioplasma, rules also in the incorporation of the outer world: our sense perceptions are already the *result* of this *assimilation* and *equalization* in regard to *all* the past in us; they do not follow directly upon the "impression"—(WP 500).

For Nietzsche, then, logic, language, and the categories cannot be derived from anything but the contingent development of human beings as natural creatures. Reasoning and speaking are perhaps peculiar to a certain species of animal, but this "rational animal" is not different from other animals due to some extra-natural faculty. Rather, it is different only due to the means it has developed to relate its peculiar constitution to its particular environing conditions. In considering our dealings with the environing world, Nietzsche argues, we should be careful not to posit, in the manner of Plato and Kant, two realms: a realm of logic, language, and reason, and a realm of the sensual or empirical. For, according to Nietzsche, language and logic are themselves thoroughly empirical in origin and function, and are no less bound up with our contingent existence than are such patently non-cognitive features of animal life as ingestion and growth.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. WP 501.

man's own for himself. He really thought that in language he possessed knowledge of the world. The content of language was not to be seen in

#### 2.1.4 Nietzsche's Empiricism and Nominalism

While Nietzsche is concerned to show the evolutionary "necessity" of the so-called "transcendental" forms of human cognition, he also notoriously refers to them as "the fundamental errors of mankind" (HAH 18), our "erroneous articles of faith" (GS 110), or the "lies" and "prejudices" of reason (TI III 2, 5). Such claims reveal the basic empiricism and nominalism that is at the root of Nietzsche's epistemology.

All of our knowledge, Nietzsche theorizes, originates in sense experience and ends in our various attempts to codify past and present experience so as to predict future experience. Such codification, as we have seen, entails the grouping of items according to a set of unities and identities. Yet Nietzsche feels that something is lost or forgotten in this movement from sensation to concept. While sense evidence reveals to us a multiplicity of individuals, conceptual knowledge delivers over a world arranged according to a relatively small number of generalizations and abstractions. Thus, we see in "On Truth and Lies"

*that: every word is a concept, but not others. Of course, he himself provides*

Every word instantly becomes a concept insofar as it is not supposed to serve as a reminder of *the unique and entirely individual original experience to which it owes its origin*; but rather, a word becomes a concept insofar as it simultaneously has to fit countless more or less similar cases—which means, purely and simply, *cases which are never equal and thus altogether unequal*. Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things. [...] We obtain the concept, as we do the form, by *overlooking what is individual and actual*; whereas *nature is acquainted with no forms and no concepts, and likewise with no species* (83, my italics).

A similar critique of the Platonization of language and thought is made in the first part of *Human, All Too Human*, where Nietzsche writes:

The significance of language for the evolution of culture lies in this, that in language mankind set up beside the world a separate world, a place it took to be so firmly set that, standing upon it, it could lift the rest of the world off its hinges and make itself master of it. To the extent that man has for long ages believed in the concepts and names of things as in *aeternae veritates* he has appropriated to himself that pride by which he raised

...such a duality probably never exists—in truth we are  
 become not only independently existing *entities* but even *the ultimately real entities* from  
 which all concrete particulars are derived. In this way, a reversal occurs whereby the  
 "actual" world—the only world that we are acquainted with: the sensuous world of  
 particulars—gets taken as the "world of mere appearance," derived from the "true" world  
 of forms, concepts, laws, etc.: "the leaf" becomes "the cause of leaves" (OTL 83).  
 Nietzsche's talk of the "errors" of reason and knowledge, then, serves to set this reversal  
 aright by reminding us of the actual derivation of the "true world" from the "world of  
 appearance":

The reasons for which "this" world has been characterized as "apparent" are  
 the very reasons which indicate its reality; any other kind of reality is  
 absolutely indemonstrable (TI III 6).

The "apparent" world is the only one: the "true" world is merely *added by a lie* (TI III 2).<sup>35</sup>

The primacy of this "apparent world" of sensuous particulars, Nietzsche thinks, can be shown through scientific inquiry, by which he seems to mean evolutionary research and the microscopic observation of biological, chemical, and physical phenomena. "Rigorous science," he contends, "can quite gradually and step by step, illuminate the history of the genesis of this world as idea [itself "the outcome of a host of errors and fantasies"] and, for brief periods of time at any rate, lift us out of the entire proceeding" (HAH 16). "Knowledge educated in the highest scientificality," he writes "contradicts" "the belief that there are *identical things*" (HAH 18). Scrupulous scientific observation, Nietzsche maintains, uncovers "a manifold one-after-another [*ein vielfaches Nacheinander*] where the naive man and inquirer of older cultures saw only two separate things" (GS 112). The passage continues:

<sup>35</sup> Cf. EH IV 8: "The concept of the 'beyond,' the 'true world' invented in order to devalue the only world there is [...] our earthly reality!"

Cause and effect: such a duality probably never exists—in truth we are confronted by a continuum [*ein continuum*] out of which we isolate a couple of pieces [...] An intellect that could see cause and effect as a continuum and a flux of occurrences [*Fluss des Geschehens*] and not, as we do, in terms of an arbitrary division and dismemberment, would repudiate the concept of cause and effect.

Such conclusions, Nietzsche sometimes claims, are even available to attentive ordinary sense perception, which, he argues, is confronted by an ever-changing array of appearances. In praise of Heraclitus, Nietzsche writes in *Twilight of the Idols*:

When the rest of the philosophic folk rejected the testimony of the senses because they showed multiplicity and change, he rejected their testimony because they showed things as if they had permanence and unity. Heraclitus too did the senses an injustice. They lie neither in the way the Eleatics believed, nor as he believed—they do not lie at all. What we *make* of their testimony, that alone introduces lies; for example, the lie of unity, the lie of thinghood, of substance, of permanence ... “Reason” is the cause of our falsification of the testimony of the senses. Insofar as the senses show becoming, passing away, and change, they do not lie (III 2).

Besides serving as a reminder of the sensuous basis of all our knowledge, there is another reason why Nietzsche refers to the truths of logic, language, and the categories as “errors.” The evolutionary scenario tends toward a reification and ossification of words and concepts, Nietzsche thinks, because it is essentially conservative; its basic aim is the *preservation* of the species. To this end, it forbids any tampering with the established conceptual framework and discourages novel sortings of appearances. The process of reification aids this prohibition by encouraging the view that the established unities and identities are not only useful fictions but indeed are given in the nature of things.

Nietzsche, however, continually argues that “the wish to preserve oneself is a symptom of a condition of distress, of a limitation of the really fundamental instinct of life which aims at the *expansion of power* and, wishing for that, frequently risks and even sacrifices self-preservation” (GS 349).<sup>36</sup> In a note from the same period, he reiterates this view:

<sup>36</sup> Cf. BGE 13: “Physiologists should think before putting down the instinct of self-preservation as the cardinal instinct of organic being. A living thing seeks above all to discharge its strength—life itself is *will to power*; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*.” Cf. also WP 649-51.

"Useful" in the sense of Darwinist biology means: proved advantageous in the struggle with others. But it seems to me that the *feeling of increase*, the feeling of *becoming-stronger*, is itself, quite apart from any usefulness in the struggle, the real *progress* [Fortschritt]: only from this feeling does there arise the will to struggle— (WP 649)

These claims have important consequences for a consideration of Nietzsche's epistemology; for, if self-preservation is not the sole or ultimate goal of our cognitive processes, the way is opened for a consideration of other possible sortings of appearances. These, in turn, provide us with foils that help to expose the contingent nature of our established conceptual framework.

Hence, having reminded us of the sensuous origins of our ordinary conceptual scheme, Nietzsche goes on to remind us of its artistic, "metaphoric" origins, which have been lost or sublimated into the literal truths of scientific fact. This artistic drive, or "intellectual play impulse" (GS 110), according to Nietzsche, is not only the real *origin* but also the real *end* of human activity. As with life in general, human beings seek not to preserve themselves but to become more, better, different; and this requires constant innovation, novel sortings, new interpretations. Intellectual endeavors begin in art and they end in art—which is to say that they do not end at all, since art, for Nietzsche, consists in ceaseless transformation.

He writes:

The drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself. This drive is not truly vanquished and scarcely subdued by the fact that a regular and rigid new world is constructed as its prison from its own ephemeral products, the concepts. It seeks a new realm and another channel for its activity, and it finds this in *myth* and in *art* generally. This drive continually confuses the conceptual categories and cells by bringing forward new transferences, metaphors, and metonymies. [...] That immense framework and planking of concepts to which the needy man clings his whole life in order to preserve himself is nothing but a scaffolding and toy for the audacious feats of the most liberated intellect. And when it smashes this framework to pieces, throws it into confusion, and puts it back together in an ironic fashion, pairing the most alien things and separating the closest, it is demonstrating that it has no need of these makeshifts of indigence and that it will now be guided by intuitions rather than concepts. There is no regular

path which leads from these intuitions into the ghostly land of schemata, the land of abstractions (OTL 88-90).

Years later, Nietzsche again voices this view, arguing that

[w]here need and distress have forced men for a long time to communicate and understand each other quickly and subtly, the ultimate result is an excess of this strength and art of communication—as it were, a capacity that has gradually been accumulated and now waits for an heir who might squander it. (Those who are called artists are these heirs [...]—all of them people who come at the end of a long chain, “late born” every one of them in the best sense of the word and, as I have said, by their nature squanderers.) (GS 354).

Thus, as we saw in the previous chapter, Nietzsche ultimately sides with the artistic or “intuitive man” rather than with the scientific or “rational man.” Unlike the latter, the former “do not lie at all.” They do not try to pass off words and concepts as entities or conditions for experience; rather, they affirm that all knowledge originates in the sense experience of particulars and that words and concepts are simply groupings of these toward various ends, self-preservation being neither the only nor the ultimate of those ends.

## 2.2 The De-deification of Nature

In his attempt to naturalize epistemology, then, Nietzsche endorses a basic form of empiricism. Against the Platonistic and Kantian priority given to the conceptual, Nietzsche warns of “confusing the last with the first” by placing “the most general, the emptiest concepts, the last smoke of evaporating reality, in the beginning, *as the beginning*” (TI III 4). Instead, he argues, “all credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth come only from the senses” (BGE 134).

Yet Nietzsche is not uncritical of empiricism, traditionally conceived. Anyone who would characterize him as a straightforward empiricist must confront prominent passages in which he decries “the coarse sensualistic prejudice that sensations teach us truths about things” (WP 516) and scoffs at “the eternally popular sensualism,” according to which “what is clear, what is ‘explained’” is “only what can be seen and felt” (BGE 14). These

and neighboring passages affirm Kant's and Boscovich's "triumph over the senses" (BGE 12), and "the Platonic way of thinking," which, contrary to the "fundamentally plebeian tastes" of the sensualists, he calls "a noble way of thinking [that] consisted precisely in a *resistance* to obvious sense evidence" (BGE 14).<sup>37</sup> How are we to reconcile such claims with the positive revaluation of the sensual called for by Nietzsche's naturalism? The answer, I think, can be found in the second part of the project to eliminate the "shadows of God": namely, the "de-deification of nature."

We have seen that "the naturalization of humanity" (the first part of the project to eliminate the "shadows of God") requires a rejection of the notion that human beings possess some divine feature that separates them from, and raises them above, the natural world. It thus rejects the ideal of knowledge as providing a God's-eye view on the world that could secure necessary, unconditional, and objective truths. We saw Nietzsche counter metaphysical epistemology and ontology with a naturalism that firmly resituates human beings within the contingent, sensuous world, and refigures human reason as one more device aiding the struggle for survival and flourishing. Thus, Nietzsche argues that knowledge is always contingent and conditional, relative to some interest, purpose, or perspective.

The "de-deification of nature" (the second part of the project to eliminate the "shadows of God") itself has two aspects. On the one hand, it is a corollary of the first part of the project. It maintains that, if we want to get rid of all the "shadows of God," we must reject the notion of a pre-given world—the world "as it really is," as it would be given to a God's-eye view. The "death of God," Nietzsche argues, enjoins us to reject *both* the notion that there is an absolute *perspective* from which the world could be viewed "as it really is" *and* the notion that there *is* such an absolute world. Instead, it asks us to refigure

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. GS 372.

knowing as relative to some perspective, theory, or interpretation,<sup>38</sup> and being as relative to the ontological commitments of a particular perspective.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, "the deification of nature" also leads Nietzsche to privilege a certain set of perspectives and interpretations: namely, naturalistic ones that withdraw from our conception of nature all theological posits. Once we have done so, Nietzsche thinks we will come to see the world as an "innocent becoming" or as "will to power."

### 2.2.1 Nietzsche's Holism: The Primacy and Irreducibility of Interpretation

If Nietzsche's epistemology supports an empiricism, it does not support what more recent philosophers have called a "reductionist" empiricism, which holds that all knowledge and experience is reducible to immediate observations that deliver over a unique and full meaning.<sup>40</sup> In a passage partially cited above, Nietzsche shows his contempt for this kind of empiricism:

It is perhaps dawning on five or six minds that physics, too, is only a world-interpretation and -exegesis [*eine Welt-Auslegung und*

<sup>38</sup> I make little differentiation between the terms "perspective," "interpretation," and "theory." "Perspective" and "interpretation" are quite often found together in Nietzsche's writing, and never sharply differentiated, a point I discuss at the beginning of Chapter 4. I also see little difference between what Nietzsche calls "perspective" or "interpretation" and what contemporary philosophers call "theory"—namely, a more or less systematic web of beliefs that arranges and makes sense of the world (or a portion of it) according to a set of purposes and desires.

<sup>39</sup> This view can be gleaned from Nietzsche's critique of positivism. He argues that the positivist belief in pre-given facts about the world is an ascetic, ultimately theological belief that attempts to get beyond the conditionality and contingency of interpretation and perspective toward some "true world of being" (GM III 24). Against this view, Nietzsche claims that there are no essences-, facts-, or meanings-in-themselves; that, on the contrary, there are only "definitions," "facts" and "meanings" within an interpretation, which answers from a particular perspective the question "what is that?" (see WP 556, 481). For a brief, yet poignant, discussion of this anti-realism in Nietzsche and Hegel, see Solomon (1983, 328-9 n15).

<sup>40</sup> The term "reductionist empiricism" is taken from Quine (1951). One of the "two dogmas of empiricism," Quine writes, "radical reductionism" is the doctrine that "every meaningful statement is [...] translatable into a statement (true or false) about immediate experience" (38). Though he is concerned to attack the theory as it survives in contemporary analytic philosophy, Quine argues that the doctrine "well antedates" analytic philosophy and can be found, for instance, in Locke and Hume (38).

-Zurechtlegung] (to suit us, if I may say so!) and *not* a world-explanation [*eine Welt-Erklärung*]; but insofar as it is based on belief in the senses, it is regarded as more, and for a long time to come must be regarded as more—namely, as an explanation. Eyes and fingers speak in its favor, visual evidence and palpableness do, too; this strikes an age with fundamentally plebeian tastes as fascinating, persuasive, *convincing*—after all, it follows instinctively the canon of truth of eternally popular sensualism. What is clear, what is “explained”? [Was is klar, was »erklärt«?] Only what can be seen and felt—*every problem has to be pursued to that point* [my italics] (BGE 14).

This passage appears in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part One, entitled “On the Prejudices of the Philosophers.” Several other passages in this Part make clear that prominent among these “prejudices” is a “myth of the given,” what Nietzsche calls the belief in “immediate certainties” (16, 17, 34). This myth encompasses the beliefs of rationalists and empiricists alike: the Cartesian *cogito* (“as though knowledge here got hold of its object purely and nakedly” [16])<sup>41</sup> as well as “Locke’s superficiality regarding the origin of ideas” (20). In §12, Nietzsche presents a critique of materialistic atomism that celebrates Roger Boscovich’s and Copernicus’ “triumph over the senses.” Boscovich in particular is credited with having criticized Newton’s and Leibniz’s conception of the atom as the ultimate unit of matter in favor of a relational notion of the atom as a quasi-material nodal point within a network of force.<sup>42</sup> In each of these seemingly disparate cases, Nietzsche uncovers the myth of “immediate certainty,” a basic conviction that there exists some foundational, simple, present item (whether it be the “I” of consciousness, immediate sense data, or the atom as the ultimate, indivisible unit of matter) that provides the basis of for all knowing and being and is the goal of all inquiry.

Against these “immediate certainties,” Nietzsche argues for a more complex, relational, and holistic conception of knowledge and its objects. Rejecting the Cartesian notion that the “I” is an irreducible, intuitive given, Nietzsche conceives of it as “a social structure,” a

<sup>41</sup> Nietzsche’s critique of the Cartesian *cogito* continues in the following passage, BGE 17.

<sup>42</sup> For an explication of Boscovich’s conception of the atom and Nietzsche’s fascination with it, see Kaufmann’s footnote to BGE 12, Stack (1981) and (1983), Crawford (1988, 87-89, 298-99), and Moles (1990, Chap. 5).

complex of sensation, thought, and affect (19).<sup>43</sup> Contrary to the Schopenhauerian conception of "the will" as "something simple, a brute datum, underivable, and intelligible by itself" (GS 127), Nietzsche contends that "willing is above all something *complicated*, something that is a unit [*Einheit*] only as a word" (BGE 19). And, "by way of rejecting Locke's superficiality regarding the origin of ideas," Nietzsche explicitly puts forward the holistic view

[t]hat individual philosophical concepts are not anything capricious or autonomously evolving, but grow up in connection and relationship with each other; that, however suddenly and arbitrarily they seem to appear in the history of thought, they nevertheless belong just as much to a system as all the members of the fauna of a continent (20).

Combining this conceptual holism, the evolutionary analogy that appears in this last phrase, and the claim that this section as a whole is meant as a rejection of Locke's reductionist empiricism, the passage can be read as arguing that perception is not pure and simple, but rather is overdetermined by the other physiological, psychological, and intellectual functions that coexist with it in a complex organism whose constitution and activity has been shaped by a long evolutionary history.<sup>44</sup>

These points are made much more explicitly in a passage from *The Gay Science* addressed "To the realists." Nietzsche writes:

You sober people who feel well armed against passion and fantasy and would like to turn your emptiness into a matter of pride and an ornament: you call yourselves realists and hint that the world really is the way it appears to you. As if reality stood unveiled before you alone [...] But in your unveiled state are not even you still very passionate and dark creatures compared to fish, and still far too similar to an artist in love? [...] You are still burdened with those estimates of things that have their origin in the passions and loves of former centuries. Your sobriety still contains a secret and inextinguishable drunkenness. Your love of "reality," for example—oh that is a primeval "love"! In every sensation and every sense impression there is a piece of this old love; and some fantasy, some prejudice, some unreason, some ignorance, some fear, and ever so much else has woven it

<sup>43</sup> This idea is discussed at length in Chapter 4.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 1 for further discussion of this idea.

and worked on it. That mountain there! That cloud there! What is "real" in that? Subtract the phantasm and every human *ingredient* from it, you sober ones! If you *can*! If you can forget your descent, your past, your training—all of your humanity and animality. There is no "reality" for us—not for you either, you sober ones (GS 57).

Here, Nietzsche states outright the twin theses (i) that there is no such thing as naked perception and (ii) that what perception perceives is not a pre-given world. Rather, he argues, perception functions as part of the total human organism and what it perceives is a world that is a palimpsest of previous interpretative construals. Perception and interpretation are inextricably intertwined.<sup>45</sup>

Nietzsche underscores these views in his critique of a contemporary form of reductionist empiricism: the *positivism* that was so pervasive in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

A famous note from 1886-87 runs:

Against positivism, which halts at phenomena—"there are only facts"—I would say: no, facts is precisely what there are not, only interpretations [Interpretationen]. We cannot establish any fact "in itself": perhaps it is nonsense [Unsinn] to even want to do such a thing. [...] In so far as the word "knowledge" has any meaning [Sinn], the world is knowable: but it is *interpretable* [deutbar] otherwise, it has no meaning [Sinn] behind it, but countless meanings [Sinne]—"Perspectivism" (WP 481).<sup>46</sup>

This insight finds its way into the *Genealogy*, written shortly thereafter. In the Third Essay of that text, Nietzsche criticizes the positivistic

*desire to halt before the factual, the factum brutum [...]* through which French science [*Wissenschaft*] nowadays tries to establish a sort of moral

<sup>45</sup> A remarkably similar point has more recently been made by Nelson Goodman: "The eye always comes ancient to its work, obsessed by its own past and by old and new insinuations of the ear, nose, tongue, fingers, heart, and brain. It functions not as an instrument self-empowered and alone, but as a dutiful member of a complex and capricious organism. Not only how but what it sees is regulated by need and prejudice. It selects, rejects, organizes, discriminates, associates, classifies, analyzes, and constructs. It does not so much mirror as take and make; and what it takes and makes it does not see bare, as items without attributes, but as things, as food, as people, as enemies, as stars, as weapons. Nothing is seen nakedly or naked. The myths of the innocent eye and of the absolute given are unholy accomplices. Both derive from and foster the idea of knowing as a processing of raw material received from the senses, and of this raw material as being discoverable either through purification rites or by methodical disinterpretation. But reception and interpretation are not separable operations; they are thoroughly interdependent" (1976, 7-8).

<sup>46</sup> Dated late 1886-spring 1887 (KSA 12, 315: 7 [60]).

superiority over German science; that general renunciation of all interpretation [*Interpretation*] (of forcing, adjusting, abbreviating, omitting, padding, inventing, falsifying, and whatever else is of the *essence* of interpreting)—all this expresses, broadly speaking, as much ascetic virtue as any denial of sensuality (it is at bottom only a particular mode of this denial) (24).

And, during the same period, in Book Five of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche criticizes “that impetuous *demand for certainty* that today discharges itself among large numbers of people in a scientific-positivistic form. The demand that one *wants* by all means that something should be firm.” No less than Christianity and metaphysics, he continues, “this, too, is still the demand for a support, a prop” (GS 347).

In these latter two passages, Nietzsche makes clear his central objection to positivism: its belief in the existence of, and desire to represent, some given and certain ontological foundation for our knowledge—“the world as it really is.” This belief and desire, Nietzsche contends, is simply metaphysical, for, as he argues in first passage, “we cannot establish any fact “‘in itself,’” “the world has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings.” That is, the world we know is the world as constructed by one or another interpretation or perspective, of which there are many. The notion of the world “as it really is” or “as it is in itself” is simply fabricated through a *negation of, a desire to transcend*, the world we know (the world as it is constructed by the many interpretations/perspectives).<sup>47</sup> It is this metaphysical belief and desire that allows Nietzsche to say that positivism, which claims to be the most empirical doctrine, expresses an “ascetic” “denial of sensuality”: in its desire for some firm, solid, “real” or “true” world, positivism disavows the actual conditions of our knowledge (the necessity and irreducibility of interpretation) and the world that this knowledge reveals (a world with “no meaning behind it, but countless

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<sup>47</sup> See TI III 6: “The reasons for which ‘this’ world has been characterized as ‘apparent’ are the very reasons that indicate its reality; any other kind of reality is absolutely indemonstrable. [...] The criteria which have been bestowed on the ‘true being’ of things are the criteria of not-being, of *naught*; the ‘true world’ has been constructed out of a contradiction to the actual world”; and TI III 2: “The ‘apparent’ world is the only one: the ‘true’ world is merely *added by a lie*.”

meanings"). This putative "true" world, Nietzsche argues, is simply the world as it would be given to a God's-eye view. And having abandoned the notion of a God's-eye view, Nietzsche also abandons its correlate: the notion of a pre-given world.

Thus, Nietzsche criticizes every notion of something "in itself," all of which attempt such an ascetic "renunciation of interpretation."

"Things that have a constitution in themselves"—a dogmatic idea with which one must break absolutely (WP 559).

That things possess a *constitution in themselves* totally apart from interpretation and subjectivity is a *totally futile hypothesis*: it presupposes that *interpretation and subjective-being are not* essential, that a thing freed from all relationships [all perspectival construal] would still be a thing (WP 560)

A "thing in itself" just as perverse as a "sense in itself," a "meaning in itself." There are no "facts in themselves," for a sense must always first be projected into them before there can be facts. The "what is that?" is a determination of meaning [*eine Sinn-Setzung*] from some other viewpoint. "Essence" [*Die "Essenz"*], "being" [*die "Wesenheit"*] is something perspectival and already presupposes a multiplicity. At bottom there always lies "what is that for me?" (for us, for all that lives, etc.). A thing would be defined once all beings [*Wesen*] had asked "what is that?" and had answered their question. Supposing that one single being, with its own relationships and perspectives for all things, were missing, then the thing would not yet be "defined." In short, the being [*Wesen*] of a thing is always only an *opinion* [*Meinung*] about the "thing." Or rather: "*it is considered*" is the actual "this is," the only "this is" (WP 556).

Against the very notion of the "in itself," Nietzsche advances what more recent Anglo-American philosophers have called a doctrine of "ontological relativity" or "internalism," according to which: questions concerning "what there is" can only be answered relative to (what Nietzsche calls) an "interpretation" or "perspective"; the only alternative to one "interpretation" is another; and it is "nonsense" to ask (or answer) what things are absolutely or "in themselves."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Goodman: "For me, there is no way that is the way the world is; and so of course no description can capture it. But there are many ways the world is, and every true description captures one of them. The difference between me and [the realist] is, in sum, the difference between absolutism and relativism (1960, 31); Quine: "What makes sense is to say not what the objects of a theory are, absolutely speaking, but how one theory of objects is interpretable

Rejecting the notion of a pre-given world, then, Nietzsche's "de-deification of nature" requires that we revise our conception of empirical knowledge. We must give up the idea that sensation delivers some pure, unmediated content, that it mirrors a world with pre-given partitions and essences. This is not, however, to assert the Kantian, transcendental view that sensuous intuition can only ever appear to us already shaped by the *a priori* forms of intuition and categories of the understanding.<sup>49</sup> Unlike Kant, Nietzsche does not separate cognition into passive and active faculties. Having dismissed the very idea of the "in itself," Nietzsche rejects the notion that sensation receives from "the world" a raw material that is then processed by our various interpretative schemes. Sensation and interpretation, for Nietzsche, are inseparable activities. "Our sense perceptions," he writes, "are already the *result* of [...] *assimilation* and *equalization* with regard to *all* the past in us; they do not follow directly upon the 'impression'" (WP 500). That is, sense perception is not new and innocent every moment; rather, what we experience each moment is the result of an entire evolutionary history. Elsewhere, he argues that "all sense perceptions are permeated with *value judgments*" (WP 505),<sup>50</sup> namely, interpretive decisions concerning what counts as "what there is."<sup>51</sup> Against both the reductionist empiricist and the Kantian transcendentalist, then, Nietzsche advances the naturalistic, evolutionary view that sense perception only functions within an on-going network of interpretations—within what he

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or reinterpretable in another" (1969a, 50); and Putnam: "what objects does the world consist of? is a question that it only makes sense to ask *within* a theory or description. [...] 'Objects' do not exist independently of conceptual schemes. We cut up the world into objects when we introduce one or another scheme of description" (1981, 49, 52). I discuss this idea more fully in Chapter 4, section 4.4.4.

<sup>49</sup> Babich (1994, 95 and chap. 3 passim) attributes to Nietzsche this Kantian view.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. GS 114: "*How far the moral sphere extends.*—As soon as we see a new image, we immediately construct it with the aid of all our previous experiences [...] All our experiences are moral [i.e., evaluative] experiences, even in the realm of sense perception."

<sup>51</sup> See WP 556, cited above, on how ontological ascriptions are judgments made according to one perspective or another.

calls an "already-created world, constructed out of nothing but appearances but become firm to the extent that this kind of appearance has preserved life" (WP 520).

According to Nietzsche, then, impressions, sensations, and perceptions do not offer any pure, simple, or unmediated picture of the world. Yet neither do judgments or statements of fact. "There are no isolated judgments!" Nietzsche writes: "An isolated judgment is never 'true,' never knowledge; only in the connection and relation of many judgments is there any surety" (WP 530). Thus, against a reductionist empiricism, Nietzsche espouses a holistic empiricism which maintains that, while all knowledge is generated out of sensuous affection, the unit of empirical significance is neither the individual sensation nor the isolated statement of fact, but the theory or interpretation as a whole in which sensations and statements are lodged.

This naturalistic, holistic view is not a skeptical view. It does not claim that human interests, desires, perspectives, and interpretations get in the way of some "true" knowledge that would reveal "the way the world really is."<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche wants to get rid of the notion of a God's-eye view altogether, and, with it, the notion of a standard of truth transcending all contingent perspectives.<sup>53</sup> Yet this does not mean that there is no common measure for interpretations or perspectives. After all, Nietzsche holds that perspectives and interpretations are, in large part, developed to help us cope with our sensuous imbrication in the natural world. A basic standard for interpretations, then, is how well they do this. Considerations of entrenchment, simplicity, scope, coherence, utility, and novelty, as well as political considerations of ideology and power, will also figure significantly in the acceptance or rejection of interpretations.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Despite her claims to the contrary, Babich (1994, chap. 3) attributes to Nietzsche this skeptical, Kantian view.

<sup>53</sup> See GM III 12.

<sup>54</sup> Nietzsche emphasizes entrenchment, e.g., in GS 57-8, 110 and BGE 188. He emphasizes simplicity ("economy of principles" or "conscience of method") in BGE 13 and 36. Considerations of scope permeate his discussions of "will to power," which aims at giving a

Despite these constraints, however, Nietzsche grants that the “de-deification of nature” permits a proliferation of interpretations.<sup>55</sup> There will be different interpretations over time, since no interpretation is immune to revision.<sup>56</sup> And there will be different coexisting interpretations, since there are different purposes and goals in different areas of life, and areas of life where several interests, purposes, and goals compete.<sup>57</sup> Yet Nietzsche also maintains that there will be different interpretations of “the same phenomena”; and that, since there is no pre-given world and no God’s-eye view, there is no absolute fact of the matter as to which one is correct.<sup>58</sup>

In *Beyond Good and Evil* §22, Nietzsche provides a simple example. He argues that “the physicists” notion of “nature’s conformity to law” is a “bad mode of interpretation” motivated by the desire to show that the physical world conforms to the democratic values of modern European political thinking. Deeply suspicious of such ascriptions, Nietzsche

comprehensive account of all natural knowing and being, from the human to the inanimate (see, e.g. BGE 36 and WP *passim*). Coherence is stressed in such passages as GS 54, BGE 20, WP 530. Utility is stressed throughout Nietzsche’s work (e.g., BGE 4, WP 493ff). Novelty is stressed, e.g., in OTL 88-91 and GS 110. Finally, considerations of ideology and power fill his writings, particularly his analyses and critiques of Christianity and “slave morality.”

<sup>55</sup> The *locus classicus* for this view is GS 374. See also WP 410, 470, 481, 600. Alexander Nehamas (1985) and David Hoy (1986) have justifiably questioned the intelligibility of the “infinite” interpretations view, which, they argue, is challenged both by recent work on relativism and by Nietzsche’s other views. I disagree, however, with Hoy’s conclusion that the problematic doctrine of perspectivism should be given up in favor of genealogy (28), since I regard Nietzsche’s perspective-language as not so much developing an optical metaphor than as closely connected with the broader and richer language of interpretation, with which genealogy is also concerned. These issues are more fully discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>56</sup> See GS 58 and WP 616.

<sup>57</sup> In GS 110, for example, Nietzsche shows how, in the area of truth and knowledge, two impulses come to compete with one another: on the one hand, an impulse toward self-preservation that strives to produce and maintain a simplified and selective version of the world; and on the other hand, an “intellectual play impulse” with a penchant for honesty and skepticism that delights in showing the contingency of the preservative “primeval errors.”

<sup>58</sup> Nietzsche’s genealogies make clear his commitment to the notion that “the world [...] has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings” (WP 481). In the *Genealogy of Morals* and elsewhere, for example, Nietzsche maintains that, while both parties agree that affective life involves change, suffering, passion, pain, and pleasure, the strong, active person, who affirms affective life in its entirety, gives a wholly different interpretation to this “fact” than does the sickly ascetic, who rejects the sensuous world precisely on account of its changeability, pain, and suffering.

offers a counter-interpretation. He claims that, "with opposite intentions and modes of interpretation," one "could read out of the same nature, and with regard to the same phenomena" a view of the world as "will to power," as "the tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power"—an interpretation that, like the physicists' view, would also see the course of the world as "necessary" and "calculable" "not because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely *lacking*, and every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment."<sup>59</sup>

Bracketing, for now, the substantive view proposed in this passage, let us focus on its methodological point. Nietzsche prefaces and concludes his account of the "laws of nature" model with the claim that it is "no matter of fact," but an "interpretation." Yet things are no different, he grants, with his alternative model, following the proposal of which he writes: "Supposing that this also is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well, so much the better." The point of this concluding comment seems to be that, without a God's-eye view on a pre-given world, there are only interpretations with no absolute fact of the matter as to which one is correct. To challenge an existing view, one cannot simply present "the plain facts" but can only offer a counter-interpretation.<sup>59</sup> As Nietzsche puts it in *The Gay Science*: "We can destroy only as

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<sup>59</sup> Contrary to the view of some Nietzsche scholars (e.g., Danto 1965, 82ff), Nietzsche is not a verificationist who can do away with metaphysical and theological beliefs simply by pointing to the lack of empirical evidence for them. On Nietzsche's view, as we have seen, interpretations can be criticized only on the basis of other interpretations, not by recourse to some bare, uninterpreted fact. Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and theology, then, will have to be much more complex and hypothetical. This is why that critique takes the form of an entire *genealogy*, which attempts to provide a deflationary psycho-historical redescription of metaphysics and theology that reveals their "*pudendo origo*" (D 42, 102; WP 254), their shameful origins and ends. Thus, Nietzsche will argue not only that the supposedly unconditional and other-worldly posits of metaphysics and morality are explicable in naturalistic terms, but also that such explanation reveals them to be pernicious and contemptible, generated through a psychological projection that sets up, as the antithesis of "the world of life, nature, and history," another world that allows us to escape life's sufferings and deceptions. The desire for the other-worldly, Nietzsche concludes, is nothing but "life's nausea and disgust with life" (BT/SC 5).

creators!—But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new ‘things’” (GS 58).

### 2.2.2 *Will to Power and the Innocence of Becoming*

Yet this is not the end of the story. While Nietzsche’s “de-deification of nature” allows a proliferation of interpretations and admits that no interpretation is uniquely correct, it does not concede that every interpretation is as good as any other. We saw that, in the passage from *Beyond Good and Evil* cited above, Nietzsche calls the physicists’ interpretation “bad ‘philology,’” a “bad mode of interpretation.” Conversely, everywhere that Nietzsche presents his own picture of a “de-deified world,”<sup>60</sup> he seems to want to promote it as a better interpretation. One might reasonably ask what criteria Nietzsche has for such an evaluation.

The answer is that naturalism itself provides a criterion. While the “death of God” leads to a rejection of all necessary, unconditional, or absolute perspectives and facts, we have seen that it also leads to a rejection of theological interpretations of nature, those that posit super-natural entities and explanatory principles. This is made particularly clear in the section of *The Gay Science* that immediately follows Nietzsche’s first pronouncement of the “death of God.”

*Let us beware!* —Let us beware of thinking that the world is a living being. Where should it expand? On what should it feed? How could it grow and multiply? We have some notion of the nature of the organic; and we should not reinterpret the exceedingly derivative, late, rare, accidental, that we perceive only on the crust of the earth and make of it something essential, universal, and eternal, which is what those people do who call the universe an organism. This nauseates me. Let us even beware of believing that the universe is a machine: it is certainly not constructed for one purpose, and calling it a “machine” does it far too much honor. Let us beware of positing generally and everywhere anything as elegant as the cyclical movements of our neighboring stars; even a glance into the Milky

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<sup>60</sup> See, e.g., GS 109, BGE 13, 36, and TI VI 8.

Way raises doubt as to whether there are not far coarser and more contradictory movements there, as well as stars with eternally linear paths, etc. The astral order in which we live is an exception; this order and the relative duration that depends on it have again made possible an exception of exceptions: the formation of the organic. The total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos—in the sense not of a lack of necessity but a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms. Judged from the point of view of our reason, unsuccessful attempts are by all odds the rule, the exceptions are not the secret aim, and the whole musical box repeats eternally its tune which may never be called a melody—and ultimately even the phrase “unsuccessful attempt” is too anthropomorphic and reproachful. But how could we reproach or praise the universe? Let us beware of attributing to it heartlessness and unreason or their opposites: it is neither perfect nor beautiful, nor noble, nor does it wish to become any of these things; it does not by any means strive to imitate man. None of our aesthetic and moral judgments apply to it. Nor does it have any instinct for self-preservation or any other instinct; and it does not observe any laws either. Let us beware of saying there are laws in nature. There are only necessities: there is nobody who commands, nobody who obeys, nobody who trespasses. Once you know that there are no purposes, you also know that there is no accident; for it is only beside a world of purposes that the word “accident” has meaning. Let us beware of saying death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type.—Let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things. There are no eternally enduring substances: matter is as much of an error as the God of the Eleatics. But when shall we ever be done with our caution and care? When will all these shadows of God cease to darken our minds? When will we complete our de-deification of nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity in terms of a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?  
 (GS 109)

This is a rich and difficult passage. For the most part, Nietzsche seems to be arguing that none of our *human, anthropomorphic* conceptions provide sustainable interpretations of the world. Yet the coda suddenly speaks of these as “shadows of *God*,” and of a “de-*deification* of nature,” rather than a *de-humanization*. In retrospect, we come to see that what Nietzsche has been urging all along is that we withdraw from the world all those things that we have imagined God to have put there and orchestrated: purpose, order, aim, form, beauty, wisdom, eternal novelty, law, hierarchy, etc. What we are left with, Nietzsche tells us, is a world that is “in all eternity chaos.”

This last remark has led some Nietzsche scholars to suppose that Nietzsche is committed to a form of metaphysical realism: to the view that the world “in itself” is a “chaos” that

only appears to us, filtered through our “aesthetic anthropomorphisms,” as ordered, arranged, formed, etc.<sup>61</sup> Yet we can read this passage otherwise. Recall that *Beyond Good and Evil* §22 argued against the naive anthropomorphisms involved in the “physicists” conception of “nature’s conformity to law,” and advocated instead a view of the world as a “tyrannical” and “inconsiderate” “will to power” with no laws or aims, expending itself fully at each moment. Such a world might approximate the “chaos” of the *Gay Science* passage. Indeed, having criticized a prevailing view, each passage advocates a view of the world as “necessary” yet lacking order, law, purpose, etc., one passage calling this “will to power,” the other calling it “chaos.” Recall, too, that Nietzsche conceded that his view of the world as “will to power” was “only interpretation” and not text or fact. Therefore, reading these passages together, we can see that the world as “chaos” is not offered as a fact—as what the world really is like before it is conceptualized by us—but as another, perhaps better (because atheological), interpretation. We can see that it is not a question of distinguishing the real from the apparent world but of distinguishing different ways of constructing apparent worlds. Seen in this light, Nietzsche is far from advocating metaphysical realism. Rather, he is seen to consistently hold the view that there is no fact of the matter that could be settled by a correct apprehension of the world in itself, but only a host of competing interpretations.

As with the *Beyond Good and Evil* passage, then, the *Gay Science* passage asserts Nietzsche’s two-sided argument: on the one hand, there are only interpretations with no fact of the matter as to which one is absolutely correct; on the other hand, “better” interpretations are those that attempt to eliminate all the “shadows of God.” This elimination, Nietzsche contends, leaves a world without theological efficient causes (God

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<sup>61</sup> Granier (1966b), (1971), and, at times, Heidegger (1937, 94-95) read Nietzsche this way. Despite her critique of Granier’s reading, Kofman (1972, 138-9) reads Nietzsche this way as well.

as *causa prima*), formal causes (the world-as-organism, -cycle, -machine, -melody, -law abiding), final causes (equilibrium, progress, happiness), or material causes (materialistic atomism, pantheism).<sup>62</sup> The effort to imbue the world with such causes was an attempt to see the world from outside, to view its natural, internal features as representations of, or as guided by, some grander plan.<sup>63</sup> But this is just what Nietzsche's naturalism cannot allow. There is no "judging, measuring, comparing, or sentencing the whole" (TI VI 8)<sup>64</sup> of life and nature, for that would require a position outside of life and nature, the possibility and intelligibility of which, Nietzsche points out, is not afforded living, natural creatures such as ourselves.<sup>65</sup>

Nietzsche urges us to give up the desire for such impossible and superfluous perspectives, and instead try to see the world "from inside." If we do so, he believes, we will come to see it as "'will to power' and nothing else" (BGE 36): a world without beginning, end, aim, purpose, foundation, or privileged aspect.<sup>66</sup> To see the world in this way is to restore "the innocence of becoming" (TI VI 7-8). It is to see that there is no unique way the world is, that the world is capable of many formulations and transformations precisely because it has no essential character.<sup>67</sup> It is to see that there are

<sup>62</sup> Against God as *causa prima*, see TI III 4-5, VI 7-8 and WP 1066-67. Against the world as organism, etc., see GS 109, 357. Against the world as teleological, see TI VI 8, Z Prologue and passim (on the last man), and WP 55, 627, 708, 1062, 1066, 1067. Against materialistic atomism, see BGE 12, 17 and WP 624. And against pantheism, see GS Preface 4 (the view that "God is everywhere" is precisely what the "de-deification of nature" sets out to reinterpret), WP 55, and 1062.

<sup>63</sup> GS 357 makes this especially clear.

<sup>64</sup> See also TI V 5.

<sup>65</sup> See TI II 2: "Judgments, judgments of value, concerning life, for it or against it, can, in the end, never be true: in themselves such judgments are stupidities. One must by all means stretch out one's fingers and make the attempt to grasp this amazing finesse, *that the value of life cannot be estimated*. Not by the living, for they are an interested party, even a bone of contention, and not judges; not by the dead, for a different reason."

<sup>66</sup> See GS 109, WP 55, 1062-67.

<sup>67</sup> Nietzsche's advocacy of an interpretation in which "laws [...] are completely lacking" is, I think, nothing more than the advocacy of a thoroughly anti-essentialist, anti-theological view of the world and of ourselves. He asks only that we give up the strong, ontological notion of necessary laws inherent in nature or in the human mind, not that we give up the notion of

as many ways the world is as there are "perspectives and affective interpretations" (GM III 12). Even apparently anti-naturalistic perspectives and interpretations are allowed, provided that they are re-interpreted as disguised naturalistic interpretations—as, for instance, expressions of an ascetic desire for the otherworldly.

### 2.3 Conclusion

Let me summarize what I have argued thus far. The "death of God"—the end of belief in theological interpretations—enjoins us to give ourselves and our world a naturalistic re-interpretation. It asks that we stop seeing human beings as demi-Gods or as the center and goal of the universe, and that we begin to see them as natural organisms who differ from other organisms in degree but not in kind. It asks us to stop seeing human reason as a divine feature with access to the necessary, the universal, and the unconditional, and to start thinking of it as a particularly complex device for managing past, present, and future experience. The "death of God" also enjoins us to stop believing that there is some absolute point of view from which the world could be seen "as it really is." Instead, it says that "the way the world is" can only ever be determined by our on-going perspectives and interpretations, none of which are inherently unchangeable, and not all of which are of a piece or entirely consistent with one another. Finally, and coming full circle, Nietzsche's affirmation of the "death of God" asks that our interpretations do without theological entities and explanatory principles. It says that we must see ourselves as thoroughly enmeshed in a world that is contingent, conditional, temporal, and affective through and through, a world without absolute beginning, essence, purpose, or aim.

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"law" altogether. I do not see that he has trouble with the notion of "law" understood in a weaker sense, as a function describing a regularity or priority internal to a particular interpretation.

This naturalism yields two of Nietzsche's most important doctrines: perspectivism and will to power. With the doctrine of perspectivism, Nietzsche rejects the theological ideals of a God's-eye view and a pre-given world. He argues instead that there are only ever contingent perspectives (or interpretations) and the entities internal to them, and that there is no absolute fact of the matter about which is uniquely correct. With the doctrine of will to power, however, Nietzsche gives his own naturalistic rendering of a world without the "shadows of God." Taken together, these doctrines tread between relativism and dogmatism without yielding to either extreme. The apparent relativism of perspectivism is held in check by Nietzsche's naturalism, which offers the doctrine of will to power in place of all theological interpretations; the apparent dogmatism of will to power is mitigated by perspectivism, which grants that will to power is itself an interpretation, yet one that is "better" by naturalistic standards.

Of course Nietzsche grants that even his naturalism is an interpretation and not a matter of fact. He acknowledges that "God's death" is capable of being interpreted in a variety of ways.<sup>68</sup> Yet he feels that his own naturalistic interpretation has "honesty" and "intellectual conscience" on its side, insofar as it takes up and pushes to the limit a centuries-old "will to truth" that finally forbids itself the lie involved in absolutist interpretations.<sup>69</sup> In short, Nietzsche grants that his view is itself an interpretation, which is all it could ever be; but he challenges objectors to come up with a better one. He is indeed committed to his naturalistic position, yet well aware that it signals not Hegel's dusk but, variously, midnight, daybreak, or noon; that it does not settle matters once and for all, but only ushers in "new struggles" (GS 108)—which, like all struggles and contests, Nietzsche encouraged and relished.

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<sup>68</sup> See GS 108, 125, 343, and WP, Book I. For an elaboration of this point, see Gilles Deleuze (1962, 152-59).

<sup>69</sup> See GS 344, 357, GM III 23-28, and WP, Book I

Having presented this general picture of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology, it remains to provide a more thorough explication of Nietzsche's perspectivism. Before doing so, however, I want to consider a prominent counter-interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemological and ontological views. Contrasting this interpretation with the one I have presented here will help us to determine just what Nietzsche's epistemological and ontological position is and will allow us to clarify the precise role that perspectivism is intended to serve.

## 3

## SKEPTICISM AND REALISM: NIETZSCHE AS NEO-KANTIAN?

*The antithesis of the apparent world and the true world is reduced to the antithesis "world" and "nothing"—*

—Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §567 (Spring 1888)

Thus far, I have argued that Nietzsche's thoroughgoing naturalism calls for a refiguration of traditional conceptions of epistemology and ontology. On the one hand, it requires that we give up the notion that human cognition is a quasi-divine feature, the ideal of which is a God's-eye view on the world. On the other hand, Nietzsche's naturalism also requires that we give up the ontological counterpart of this God's-eye view, namely, the idea that there exists a pre-given world which it is the goal of knowledge to objectively represent. The task of the final chapter will be to fill out and substantiate these claims, and to show how a coherent and plausible interpretation of Nietzsche's doctrine of perspectivism can be seen to follow from them.

Before proceeding with this constructive project, however, we must pause to consider a prominent counter-interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology. According to this—what I will call neo-Kantian<sup>1</sup>—view, Nietzsche's perspectivism is to be considered “an obvious and nonproblematic doctrine” (Clark 1990, 135) that entails no radical revision of traditional conceptions of epistemology. Indeed, on this account, Nietzsche's

<sup>1</sup> A “neo-Kantian” interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology has been explicitly advocated by Vaihinger (1911, 84), Clark (1990), and Stack (1992, 80, 83) and has been attributed to Wilcox (1974) by Magnus (1980, 261). However, as will be seen below, this interpretation is much more widespread, indeed is implicit in most accounts of Nietzsche's conception of knowing and being. See note below for further references.

epistemology turns out to be simply a modification of Kant's transcendental idealism.

Nietzsche's ontology, too, is given a Kantian formulation. Thus, over against the world of "appearance" constructed by the human sensibility and understanding, there is the world of becoming, "what might be called 'becoming in itself,'" which "corresponds to Kant's conception of 'things in themselves' and generates the same kind of paradoxes" (Stack 1980, 54). In general, then, this view holds that the doctrines of perspective and becoming give us "a Nietzsche who is merely rehashing familiar Kantian themes, minus the rigor of Kant's exposition" (Leiter 1994, 351).<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to this neo-Kantian interpretation, I have argued that Nietzsche's philosophy *does* entail a radical revision of traditional conceptions of epistemology and ontology. In this chapter, then, I will need to provide an explanation of how the neo-Kantian account could have arisen and show why it is a flawed account. I will be arguing that Nietzsche's refiguration of epistemology and ontology is indeed radical, and that, in fact, it should be seen as an attempt to solve (or dissolve) the metaphysical difficulties generated by traditional (particularly Kantian) accounts of knowing and being.

### 3.1 The Skeptical Neo-Kantian (SNK) Interpretation of Nietzsche's Epistemology and Ontology

It has become common, in Nietzsche scholarship, to claim that Nietzsche's epistemological and ontological views are modified versions of Kant's.<sup>3</sup> This

<sup>2</sup> Leiter takes this phrase from Gemes (1992, 49), who, in fact, argues against this view of Nietzsche. Leiter, however, finds the characterization appropriate, adding that "this is not a problem, particularly since Nietzsche's primary concerns lie elsewhere." On the contrary, I argue here that epistemological and ontological issues *are* of central concern for Nietzsche and that his views in this regard are *not* Kantian. Apropos the above characterization, cf. Stack (1981c, 108): "It has not been sufficiently emphasized that Nietzsche's account of the 'apparent' or 'phenomenal world' and the means by which we come to claim knowledge of it are only skeptical variations on Kantian themes."

<sup>3</sup> This view was proposed early on by Vaihinger (1911, 84) and has gained currency in recent years. It has been suggested, asserted, or argued for by Kaufmann (1950, 205ff), Grimm (1977, 53 and *passim*), Stack (1980, 48), (1981c, 108), (1987), (1992), Magnus (1983a, 52),

interpretation has two different variants: a skeptical, metaphysical variant, and, more recently, an anti-skeptical, realist variant. While they differ significantly in certain respects, both of these versions nonetheless have in common an interpretation of Nietzsche that, I will argue, is flawed.

The metaphysical or skeptical neo-Kantian (SNK) view<sup>4</sup> results from several interpretive decisions. First, it treats Nietzsche's corpus as a whole and discerns throughout that corpus a fundamental continuity with respect to epistemological and ontological issues. It claims that all Nietzsche's texts exhibit essentially the same skeptical view of knowledge, truth, common sense, language, and science.<sup>5</sup> Thus, from the early essay, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense"—which maintains that "truths are illusions that we have forgotten are illusions" (84)—through the notes on epistemology in

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Schacht (1983, 62, 83), (1985, 79), Blondel (1986, 98ff), Crowell (1987, 17n2), Davey (1987a, 20-1), Conway (1990, 99ff), Clark (1990, 121 and *passim*), Leiter (1994, 351), Houlgate (1993), and Babich (1994, 2-3, 77-8, 85, 90, 95). This view is also implicit, I think, in the distinction between perspectival appearance and the unknowable world "in itself" assumed by Danto (1965, 96) and Magnus (1978, 26ff).

<sup>4</sup> As will become clear, my account of this view is a composite drawn from a number of commentators, not all of whom entirely agree with one another. Nonetheless, all these commentators can be seen to share a largely similar, if not identical, interpretation of Nietzsche's notions of perspectivism and becoming. The purpose of bringing together these views in a synthetic account is to highlight the basic interpretive framework that underlies this position and to give it its strongest formulation.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Arthur Danto writes: "In a precocious essay, written in 1873 [...] Nietzsche asks the old, cynical question, What is truth? It was to be a question that occupied him throughout his entire philosophical life, and the answer he gave it here [...] was one he never saw fit to modify in any essential respect" (1965, 38). Daniel Breazeale concurs: "it is not only true that, as Arthur Danto has contended, Nietzsche never modified 'in any essential respect' the theory of truth which he advanced in his unpublished writings of the early 1870's, but it is also true that these same writings contain by far his most explicit, detailed, and sustained treatments of basic epistemological issues. Not only are most of his later published remarks on this subject compatible with these early discussions, they actually seem in some cases to presuppose them" (1979, xlvi). While disagreeing with Danto that Nietzsche's epistemological position remained unchanged over the course of his career, John Wilcox writes: "[Nietzsche] denies that anything is 'true' or that we 'know' anything in any sense which presupposes insight into the thing in itself, the transcendental reality which Kant thought had to be distinguished from appearance or phenomena. Doubt about *that kind* of truth or knowledge was not uncommon in the nineteenth century, largely because of the efforts of Kant [...] That kind of intellectual pessimism, despair about that kind of truth, was one of Nietzsche's concerns from early to late" (1974, 127). In a similar vein, George Stack writes that Nietzsche "never really retreats from [the] theme" that "knowledge, especially of the Kantian variety, entails 'falsification'" (1980, 50).

*The Will to Power*—which claim that “truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live” (493)—Nietzsche is seen to consistently hold the Kantian position that we can only have knowledge of the phenomenal world of our own construction and not of things as they are in themselves. We can thus hope for no correspondence between our language or thought and the world as it really is.<sup>6</sup>

For Kant, this restriction of knowledge to phenomena is no cause for dismay. On the contrary, it is felicitous for at least two reasons. Insofar as Kant’s view rejects as useless speculation any claim to knowledge concerning metaphysics and morality, this limitation can be said to place philosophy on a more firm, scientific foundation. Moreover, Kant’s view can claim to “make way for faith” concerning those metaphysical and moral concerns that are now judged to lie beyond the scope of knowledge but within reach of Reason. However, for Nietzsche, who held no such faith in God, reason, or morality, this skeptical insight is said to have led to a more deeply felt sense of our fundamental ignorance about the world.<sup>7</sup> Thus, in an early text, he claims that

despair of truth [...] attends every thinker who sets out from the Kantian philosophy, provided he is a vigorous and whole man in suffering and desire and not a mere clattering thought- and calculating-machine. [...] If Kant ever should begin to exercise any wide influence we shall be aware of it in the form of a gnawing and disintegrating skepticism and relativism; and only in the most active and noble spirits who have never been able to exist in a state of doubt would there appear instead that undermining and despair of all truth (UM III 3).

Similarly, toward the end of his career, Nietzsche describes the Copernican Revolution in astronomy and epistemology<sup>8</sup> as “the self-belittlement of man”:

<sup>6</sup> On this point, see Danto (1965, 72ff), Grimm (1977, 44-65 and *passim*), and Stack (1992, 83).

<sup>7</sup> See Wilcox (1974, 125-27), Stack (1992, 83). Danto (1965) calls Nietzsche’s view and epistemological and ontological “nihilism.”

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche clearly intends his description of the Copernican revolution to cover not only Copernicus’ “defeat of theological astronomy” but also “Kant’s *victory* over the dogmatic concepts of theology.” Indeed, his discussion of astronomy moves directly into a discussion of Kant’s critique.

Alas, the faith in the dignity and uniqueness of man, in his irreplaceability in the great chain of being, is a thing of the past—he has become an *animal*, literally and without reservation or qualification, he who was, according to his old faith, almost God [...] Since Copernicus, man seems to have got himself on an inclined plane—now he is slipping faster and faster away from the center into—what? into nothingness? into a “*penetrating* sense of his nothingness”? (GM III 25).

From such passages, the SNK interpretation draws some of its essential conclusions. It argues that Nietzsche places himself among those “most active and noble spirits” who are overcome by Kantian “skepticism.” Yet it goes on to argue that Nietzsche puts a peculiar twist on Kant’s critique of dogmatic metaphysics. Arguing that the result of this critique is the destruction of all transcendent ideals and all claims to transcendent knowledge,<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche is said to draw the novel conclusion that Kantian skepticism entails a sort of “relativism.” That is, without such ideals and such knowledge, Nietzsche is said to argue that there is no longer any justification for the hierarchy that sets human beings apart from and above all other animals. Moreover, since, according to Kant, human knowledge is restricted by its sensory-cognitive makeup, Nietzsche is said to have concluded that one can legitimately suppose every other animal species to be likewise limited by and to its own sensory-cognitive “perspective.”<sup>10</sup>

This reading is bolstered by historical investigations into the sources of Nietzsche’s skepticism. George Stack has done the most to promote the view that the later Nietzsche’s perspectivist epistemology is a natural outgrowth of his early acceptance of the skeptical position held by many nineteenth century neo-Kantian philosophers of science, particularly

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<sup>9</sup> This is not, of course, Kant’s own conclusion. While Kant does deny that we can have knowledge that transcends what is given through sensuous intuition, he certainly does not deny the existence, legitimacy, or fundamental importance of transcendent ideals. The view that Nietzsche draws from Kant such an extreme conclusion receives support from those passages in which the former praises the latter for having limited knowledge to the realm of appearance, while chiding him for exceeding the limits he himself set. See, e.g., BT 18-19 and GS 335.

<sup>10</sup> This view receives some support from GS 374. I discuss this passage and its various interpretations below.

F.A. Lange.<sup>11</sup> According to Stack, Lange followed Kant in claiming that we have only a mediated knowledge of the world, and that what performs this mediation is a conceptual apparatus that arranges the world for us in terms of substance, cause and effect, unity, identity, continuous and irreversible time, etc. Kant took this intuitive and categorial framework to be given in our cognitive constitution. His transcendental arguments sought to show the necessary and universal operation of the forms of sensuous intuition and categories of the understanding in human thought and experience. Here, it is said, Lange departs somewhat from Kant. The former is said to have rejected the latter's transcendental account in favor of an evolutionary account of the existence and scope of the categorial system. What Kant took to be logically and conceptually *a priori*, Lange sought to show, has, in actuality, only a temporal and evolutionary priority. That is, what Kant felt to be necessary and universal for rational thought and experience, Lange argued to be only the contingent product of a particular "physico-psychological organization,"<sup>12</sup> itself a result of the natural selection of traits that have proven their practical value for the survival of the species (Stack 1980, 33-5).

Lange's neo-Kantian evolutionism, the story goes, was taken up by Nietzsche, who argued in similar fashion that "the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface and sign-world" (GS 354), a world determined by "those primeval basic errors"

<sup>11</sup> This argument is made in each of Stack's books and essays on Nietzsche. For more on the importance of Lange to Nietzsche, see Vaihinger (1911, 83-4, 104) and Nola (1987, 528-33 and passim).

<sup>12</sup> See Stack (1980, 33-7) and (1991, 39ff). Cf. Schrift: "The most pervasive perspectives in the Nietzschean account are those of physiology. In this group, one can classify those perspectives determined by our sensory apparatus in particular and human physiology in general. For Nietzsche, there is no escape from the perspectives which our physiology imposes on us" (1990, 146). Also cf. Babich: "The plausibility of Nietzsche's perspectivalist possibility is ecophysiological, that is, determined by the *physiological* or physical constitution of the interpreting perspective and its relative (*ecological*) position in the world" (1994, 84; cf. 148). Other commentators, such as Warnock (1978, 41ff), have argued that what determines the parameters of our "perspective," for Nietzsche, is our language and grammar.

"which were continually inherited, until they became almost part of the basic endowment of the species" (GS 110).<sup>13</sup> Such "errors," for both Lange and Nietzsche, define the parameters of our "perspective," construed as a species-concept and not as an individual point of view (Stack 1991, 39-40). Due to their different "physico-psychological" constitutions and organizations, different species can be supposed to have different "perspectives" (44-5).<sup>14</sup> According to the skeptical interpretation, it is this that leads Nietzsche to claim that

the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and only in these. We cannot look around our own corner: it is hopeless curiosity that wants to know what other kinds of intellects there might be [...] But I should think that today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner (GS 374).<sup>15</sup>

On the SNK account, then, perspectivism is the doctrine that every species can only know as much as is allowed by its "physico-psychological organization."

The SNK reading, then, construes Nietzsche's perspectival epistemology as skeptical in a two-fold sense. This perspectivism is *horizontally* skeptical insofar as it grants the

<sup>13</sup> Cf. HAH 16: "That which we now call this world is the outcome of a host of errors and fantasies that have gradually arisen and grown entwined with one another in the course of the overall evolution of the organic being, and are now inherited by us as the accumulated treasure of the entire past—as treasure: for our humanity now depends upon it." Cf. also GS 57. Houlgate (1993, 145-46 and passim) offers an interpretation similar to Stack's, though on exclusively textual, rather than historical, grounds.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Danto (1965, 40-1).

<sup>15</sup> An earlier statement of this view appears in "On Truth and Lies," where Nietzsche writes: "how miserable, how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature. [...] T]his intellect has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life. Rather, it is human, and only its possessor and begetter takes it so solemnly—as though the world's axis turned within it. But if we could communicate with the gnat, we would learn that he likewise flies through the air with the same solemnity, that he feels the flying center of the universe within himself" (79). Pages later, he continues: "If but for an instant [man] could escape from the prison wall's of this faith, his 'self-consciousness' would be immediately destroyed. It is even a difficult thing for him to admit to himself that the insect or the bird perceives an entirely different world from the one that man does, and that the question of which one of these perceptions of the world is the more correct one is quite meaningless, for this would have to have been decided previously in accordance with the criterion of the *correct perception*, which means, in accordance with a criterion which is *not available*" (86). Cf. WP 616.

existence of “other kinds of intellects” about whose “worldviews” we can know nothing, except that they must be different from our own.<sup>16</sup> But it is also *vertically* skeptical, skeptical not only about specific content of different perspectives but also about the basic content of all perspectives, i.e., about the “given” that is differently formulated by these various perspectives. The skeptical account of Kant’s, Lange’s, and Nietzsche’s epistemological positions claims that the phenomenal world—the world as it exists for a particular perspective—is a “mediated” world, a world of “representations” or “appearances.” It thus implies that there is some “real,” “unmediated,” “original” world that perspectives distort, filter, or represent. For Kant, this is the noumenal world, the realm of things in themselves that is apprehended by the sensuous intuition and worked-up by the categories of the understanding before it can be considered known. For Lange, this “original” world is the “evanescent stream” of “‘unknowable’ becoming” (Stack 1981b, 80), a “presumed chaotic ‘manifold’ of sensory impressions” (Stack 1991, 35). And according to the SNK interpretation, there exists a Nietzschean counterpart to Kant’s and Lange’s “originary world.” Nietzsche is said to have synthesized Kant, Heraclitus, Boscovich, Schopenhauer, and Lange to arrive at a view that the world in itself is a “becoming,” “chaos,” or “will to power,” a fluid, impermanent, and undifferentiated *Umwelt* to which the categories of knowledge (identity, substance, causality, etc.) do not apply.<sup>17</sup> These categories, which define the parameters of our “perspective,” impose order

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion and criticism of this view, see Nehamas (1983) and Hoy (1986, 24ff). These issues are more fully discussed below.

<sup>17</sup> This formulation appears explicitly or implicitly in: Vaihinger (1911, 84 and *passim*); Jaspers (1935, 212-13, 321, 351-52), Heidegger (1936-7, 3-6), (1939, 3-9, 64ff), Morgan (1941, 267ff), Danto (1965, 80, 96-7), Granier (1966b), (1971), Kofman (1970, 138-9), Heller (De Man 1972, 46), Wilcox (1974, 132-3), Grimm (1978, 30 and *passim*), Magnus (1978, 25-32), Stack (1980, 50ff; 1991, *passim*), Mittelman (1984), Taylor (1984, 93), Houlgate (1986, 56-95) and (1993, 133, 135), Nola (1987), Schrift (1990, chaps. 5-7), Allen (1991, 423) and (1992, 38), and Babich (1994, 87 and *passim*). A more novel interpretation is presented by Blondel, who argues that "Nietzsche gives a *reality*, as a thing 'in itself,' to the *body*"(1986, 98).

on this becoming, thus helping us to cope with it and to increase our chances for survival. But, for Nietzsche, "the categories are 'truths' only insofar as they are conditions of life for us" (WP 515). "It is improbable that our 'knowledge' should extend further than is strictly necessary for the preservation of life" (WP 494). As Karl Jaspers puts it: "Life quite properly believes in being, and were it to believe in becoming instead, it would perish [...] becoming [is] a doctrine that [Nietzsche] considers 'true, but deadly'" (Jaspers 1935, 351).

### 3.2 Problems with the SNK Interpretation

The SNK view, then, seems to receive a good deal of textual support and has acquired a number of prominent advocates. However, both the vertical and horizontal skepticisms that constitute this neo-Kantian construal of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology run into problems with regard to Nietzsche's texts themselves and to basic logical and conceptual considerations. An examination of these difficulties, I think, will help to show that Nietzsche's position is not what the SNK interpretation would have it to be.

#### 3.2.1 Problems with Vertical Skepticism

The claim that perspectivism endorses a vertical skepticism seems to go against Nietzsche's explicit rejection of Kant's notion of the "thing in itself" and the very distinction between a "real" and an "apparent" world. Indeed, Nietzsche rejects this distinction in the very passage in which the notion of perspectivism is first introduced. Having claimed that "the world of which we become conscious is only a surface- and sign-world," Nietzsche writes:

You will guess that it is not the opposition of subject and object that concerns me here: this distinction I leave to the epistemologists [*Erkenntnisstheoretikern*] who have become entangled in the snares of grammar (the metaphysics of the people). It is even less the opposition of "thing in itself" [»*Ding an sich*«] and appearance [*Erscheinung*]; for we do

not "know" [»erkennen«] nearly enough even to be allowed to *distinguish* in this way (GS 354).

While this last phrase *sounds* like a skeptical statement, it actually amounts to a rejection of skepticism. Nietzsche's point is that, without access to a God's-eye view that could confirm the existence of a thing in itself and distinguish it from its appearances, we have no basis for making such a distinction and thus no basis for skepticism. Elsewhere in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche makes a similar point:

What is "appearance" [»Schein«] for me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence [*eines Wesens*]: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask that one could place over an unknown *x* or remove from it! (GS 54)

This critique of the distinction between appearance and its putative opposites (and of the subordination of the former to the latter) is taken up again in later texts. For instance, in *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes:

The "apparent" [»scheinbare«] world is the only one: the "true" [»wahre«] world is merely *added by a lie...* (TI III 2)

The reasons for which "this" world has been characterized as "apparent" [scheinbar] are the very reasons which indicate its reality [Realität]; any other kind of reality is absolutely indemonstrable [...] The criteria which have been bestowed on the "true being" [»wahren Sein«] of things are the criteria of not-being, of naught; the "true world" [»wahre Welt«] has been constructed out of contradiction to the actual world [wirklichen Welt] (TI III 6).

The true world [wahre Welt]—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent [scheinbare] one perhaps? But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one* (TI IV 6).<sup>18</sup>

And, in *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche underscores these points:

The antithesis of the apparent [scheinbaren] world and the true [wahren] world is reduced to the antithesis "world" and "nothing"— (WP 567).

<sup>18</sup> Reading this passage against the background of a dualistic, Kantian interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology, Daniel Conway construes it as a "warning" rather than a celebratory statement (1990, 103). Yet this reading is not very plausible, especially since the passage goes on to characterize this event of abolition in a highly affirmative tone: "Noon; moment of briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA" (TI IV 6). For further criticism of Conway's Kantian interpretation, see the note below.

The antithesis "thing in itself" [»*Ding an sich*«] and "appearance" [»*Erscheinung*«] is untenable; with that, however, the concept of "appearance" also disappears (WP 552).

Of course, these passages do not employ a consistent terminology: in some passages, Nietzsche explicitly refers to Kant's distinction between *Ding an sich* and *Erscheinung*, while, in others, he refers to the non-Kantian, but Platonic or Christian, distinction between *die wahre Welt* and *die scheinbare Welt*. Yet this vacillation is not mere terminological carelessness. As the following passage makes clear, Nietzsche wants to equate the Kantian distinction between thing in itself and appearance with the Platonic-Christian distinction between the true world and the apparent world:

Any distinction between a "true" [»*wahre*«] and an "apparent" [»*scheinbare*«] world—whether in the Christian manner or in the manner of Kant (in the end, an *underhanded Christian*<sup>19</sup>)—is only a suggestion of decadence, a symptom of the *decline of life* (TI III 6).

Taken together, these passages make the following naturalistic argument. Kant's distinction between the thing in itself and appearance is merely a version of the Platonic-Christian distinction between the true world and the apparent world (the heavenly world of pure, unlimited knowledge, goodness, beauty, and peace vs. the earthly, sensual world of ignorance and suffering). Yet Nietzsche argues that this latter distinction is unjustified, since the only world with which we are acquainted [*erkennen*] is the "apparent world." How, then, does the notion of "the true world" (and thus the "thing in itself") arise? Nietzsche sees it as "constructed out of contradiction to the actual world," that is, as originating out of a hatred of this world on the part of a this-worldly creature, a hatred that has led to the fictitious fabrication and elevation of "another world," which, as the antithesis to this "merely apparent" world, is deemed a "true world," a world "in itself."

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<sup>19</sup> Recall that Nietzsche also calls Christianity "Platonism for 'the people'" (BGE Preface), thus completing the equation between Platonism, Christianity, and Kantianism. On Kant's "underhanded Christianity," see also GS 335 and GM III 25.

This argument permeates Nietzsche's later writings. How, then, can the SNK interpretation claim that Nietzsche holds a view so close in structure to the Kantian view he is seen here to reject? How can it claim that Nietzsche is a skeptic who maintains that there is a world in itself of becoming? This difficulty has not been left unattended by those who advocate the SNK view. These commentators often argue that it is not Kant's notion of a noumenal world that Nietzsche objects to but the characterization of this world as a world of "things in themselves," or a "true world." Nietzsche is said to follow Kant in claiming that the world of becoming, like the world of things in themselves, is unknowable. Thus, following Kant's claim that "knowledge has to do only with appearances and must leave the thing in itself as indeed real per se, but as not known by us" (1781/1787, B xx), Nietzsche writes:

*Knowledge and becoming exclude one another* (WP 517).

*Knowledge in itself in a world of becoming is impossible* (WP 617).

A world of becoming could not, in the strict sense, be "comprehended" or "known"; only to the extent that the "comprehending" and "knowing" intellect encounters a coarse already-created world, built out of nothing but appearances [*Scheinbarkeiten*] but become firm to the extent that this kind of appearance [*Schein*] has preserved life—only to this extent is there anything like "knowledge" (WP 520).<sup>20</sup>

In these passages, it would seem that Nietzsche is making the Kantian argument that what is available to our knowledge is only the world of appearance—the noumenal world filtered through the forms of intuition and categories of the understanding (Kant) or our "physico-psychological" apparatus (Nietzsche). Nietzsche's only criticism of Kant would then be that Kant conceives of this noumenal world as a world of "things" that exist "in-themselves." According to the neo-Kantian interpretation we are considering, Nietzsche disapproves of this conception insofar as it falsely attributes the intra-phenomenal notions

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<sup>20</sup> Mittelman (1984, 5) and Stack (1980, 52-3) make much of these passages.

of unity, individuation, and duration to a world that is really "a sheer, undifferentiated flux" (Danto 1965, 89)<sup>21</sup> or "an ever-flowing, ever-changing, chaotic 'reality'" (Grimm 1977, 18).<sup>22</sup> For the same reason, this interpretation claims, it is wrong to characterize the world of becoming as a "true" world, since truth and knowledge require a world whose states of affairs remain distinct and durable over time.<sup>23</sup> Thus, according to this interpretation, Nietzsche indeed argues that there is an ultimate, noumenal reality (the world of becoming); but, against the Kantian and Platonic-Christian views,<sup>24</sup> this world is not a "true" world, but, as it turns out, a "false" world, insofar as it is a "self-contradictory world of becoming and change" (Mittelman 1984, 5).

Yet this proposed solution is unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. Not the least of these is that, having asserted the unknowability of becoming, Nietzsche is said, here, to positively characterize it. But even if we leave aside this difficulty, other problems remain. It is clear that, in the above-cited passages from the published works (*Gay Science* and *Twilight*), Nietzsche is not merely against a characterization of the noumenal world as a "true" world of "things"; rather, *he is against every sort of dualistic view* according to which "appearance" is contrasted with something other than "appearance." "The 'apparent' world," he writes, "is the only world"; "any other kind of reality is absolutely indemonstrable" (TI III 2, 6). In fact, with this rejection of Kantian, Platonic-Christian, and every other dualism, Nietzsche proposes that we abolish the very notion of

<sup>21</sup> See also Danto (1965, 96-7).

<sup>22</sup> See also Grimm (1977, 2, 30, 53, 67-8). Magnus (1978) writes of "the [...] unintelligible flux of becoming" (25), "the radical flux of becoming" (196), "an [...] incoherent stratum" upon which we impose form (xiv).

<sup>23</sup> See Danto (1965, 75), Grimm (1977, 46-7 and passim), Mittelman (1984, 4-5).

<sup>24</sup> Of course, Kant never calls the world of things in themselves or of noumena a "true" world. Yet, nevertheless, the noumenal world is, for Kant, the realm of those supreme Ideas—God, freedom, and immortality—which it is the point of first *Critique* to "make way for." In this sense, then, Nietzsche has some justification for calling Kant an "underhanded Christian" (TI III 6), and for claiming that Kant's Copernican Revolution is "the straightest route to—the old ideal" (GM III 25; cf. GS 335).

"appearance,"<sup>25</sup> for this notion has only ever functioned in opposition and subordination to "that which appears," namely, the world as it is in itself.

Indeed, Kant needed to posit the "thing in itself" for just this reason. In the preface to the second edition of the first *Critique*, Kant writes:

[A]ll possible speculative knowledge of reason is limited to mere objects of *experience*. But our further contention must also be duly borne in mind, namely that though we cannot *know* these objects as things in themselves, we must yet be in position to at least *think* them as things in themselves; otherwise we should be landed in the absurd conclusion that there can be appearance without anything that appears (1781/87, B xxvi).<sup>26</sup>

Thus is Kant led into the notorious "problem of affection."<sup>27</sup> It is Kant's claim that, for thought to have any content, our faculty of sensibility must be affected from without. That is, he holds that the world of phenomena or appearance, with which our knowledge is concerned, must have something outside it as its "cause" or "ground" (e.g., A494/B522ff). This "something" cannot be an appearance, unless Kant is willing—which he is not—to assert the idealist thesis that a representation, i.e., something in us, is the cause of our representations; but neither can this "something" be a thing in itself, for that would mean extending to things in themselves the category of causality, which, Kant wants to claim, has only intra-phenomenal validity.

It is not my aim here to discuss in detail either this difficulty as it arises in Kant or the various solutions to it offered by Kant's commentators. I raise the issue only because Nietzsche joins the host of Kant's critics on this point, and because Nietzsche's criticism of Kant in this regard offers further evidence against the SNK interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectivism. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche criticizes Kant on precisely this issue:

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<sup>25</sup> TI III 6, IV 6; WP 567, 552.

<sup>26</sup> Other relevant passages are collected and discussed in Henry Allison (1983, 238ff and 363-4n15).

<sup>27</sup> See Henry Allison (1983, 247ff) for a nice discussion of this problem.

The sore spot of Kant's critical philosophy has gradually become visible even to dull eyes: Kant no longer has a right to his distinction "appearance" and "thing in itself"—he had deprived himself of the right to go on distinguishing in this old familiar way, in so far as he rejected as impermissible making inferences from phenomena to the cause of phenomena—in accordance with his conception of causality and its purely intra-phenomenal validity (WP 553).<sup>28</sup>

Nietzsche's point, here, is clearly that, if Kant's only justification for positing a thing in itself is that it is a necessary causal corollary to the notion of appearance, then he is unjustified in making this posit according to his own view that causality cannot apply to things in themselves.

Of course, as Nietzsche is well aware, Kant provides another justification for positing a realm of things in themselves or noumena. The passage from the first *Critique* cited above continues as follows:

Now let us suppose that the distinction, which our Critique has shown to be necessary, between things as objects of experience and those same things as they are in themselves, had not been made. In that case all things in general, as far as they are efficient causes, would be determined by the principle of causality, and consequently by the mechanism of nature. I could not, therefore, without palpable contradiction, say of one and the same being, for instance the human soul, that its will is free and yet is subject to natural necessity, that is, is not free. For I have taken the soul in both propositions *in one and the same sense*, namely as a thing in general, that is, as a thing in itself [*Sache selbst*]; and save by means of a preceding critique, could not have done otherwise. But if our Critique is not in error in teaching that the object is to be taken *in a twofold sense*, namely as appearance and as thing in itself [...] then there is no contradiction in supposing that one and the same will is, in the appearance, that is, in its

<sup>28</sup> Nietzsche mounts this critique of Kant even in *Human, All Too Human*. In a section entitled "Appearance and thing in itself [Erscheinung und Ding an sich]," he writes: "Philosophers are accustomed to station themselves before life and experience—before that which they call the world of appearance—as before a painting that has been unrolled once and for all and unchangeably depicts the same scene: this scene, they believe, has to be correctly interpreted, so as to draw a conclusion as to the nature of the being that produced the picture: that is to say, as to the nature of the thing in itself, which it is customary to regard as the sufficient reason [*zureichende Grund*] for the world of appearance. Against this, more rigorous logicians, having clearly identified the concept of the metaphysical as that of the unconditioned, consequently also unconditioning, have disputed any connection between the unconditioned (the metaphysical world) and the world we know: so what appears in appearance is precisely *not* the thing in itself, and no conclusion can be drawn from the former as to the nature of the latter" (16). Nietzsche clearly agrees with this logical critique of the thing in itself, though he goes on to mount another, evolutionary, critique of the notion.

visible acts, necessarily subject to the law of nature, and so far *not free*, while yet, as belonging to a thing in itself, it is not subject to that law, and is therefore *free* (Kant 1781/87, B xxvii).

We see here that the more fundamental reason for Kant's positing a world of things in themselves or noumena is to save the metaphysical ideas of God, freedom, and immortality from their elimination by a thoroughgoing empiricism. Nietzsche recognizes this and criticizes Kant on this account as well. From his early work<sup>29</sup> on, Nietzsche admires Kant for having dismissed metaphysical talk as unintelligible, for having restricted knowledge to "appearance," and for having granted that the objects of our knowledge are constructions. Yet, in his later work, Nietzsche is more critical of what he takes to be the real motivation behind Kant's critique—the restoration of those metaphysical, anti-natural specters: God, free will, and the soul. He writes, in *The Gay Science*:

And now don't cite the categorical imperative, my friend! This term tickles my ear and makes me laugh despite your serious presence. It makes me think of the old Kant who had obtained "the thing in itself"—another very ridiculous thing!—by *stealth* and was punished for this when the "categorical imperative" crept stealthily into his heart and led him *astray*—back to "God," "soul," "freedom," and "immortality," like a fox who loses his way and goes astray back into his cage. Yet it had been *his* strength and cleverness that had *broken open* the cage! (335)<sup>30</sup>

In the 1886 "Preface" to *Daybreak*, Nietzsche reiterates this critique:

[T]o create room for *his* "moral realm" [Kant] saw himself obliged to posit an undemonstrable world, a logical "Beyond"—it was for precisely that that he had need of his critique of pure reason! In other words: *he would not have had need of it* if one thing had not been more vital to him than anything else: to render the "moral realm" unassailable, even better incomprehensible to reason (3).

Thus, while Nietzsche praises Kant's critique of the possibility of metaphysical "knowledge," he criticizes the anti-naturalistic motivation that lurks behind this critique,

<sup>29</sup> See BT 18-19.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. A 55. Also cf. GM III 25, where Nietzsche argues that the Copernican Revolution, though superficially anti-theological, is really theological and ascetic through and through.

Kant's attempt to reinvigorate "faith" and the strict dualism between appearances and things in themselves.

Nietzsche's criticism of Kant, then, is not merely a critique of the notion of "things" "in themselves." It is a criticism of the very dualism between appearance and something other than appearance. Neither in his criticism of Kant's notion of "affection" nor in his criticism of Kant's metaphysical designs does Nietzsche object to the characterization of noumena as individual items: "things" "in themselves." Rather, he objects to the very distinction between noumena and phenomena. Indeed, Nietzsche's rejection of the notion of the "affection" of phenomena by things in themselves applies equally well to the SNK interpretation of "becoming" as the ground of perspectives. For, were Nietzsche to claim that an unknowable becoming is the cause or ground of appearance, he would run into the same criticism he makes of Kant: namely, that nothing in our experience of the world, not even the notion of causality, can lead us to an extra-phenomenal world. "For we do not 'know' nearly enough even to be allowed to *distinguish* in this way."

For Nietzsche, as for Kant, we are led to this distinction only through the desire to justify such theological and metaphysical notions as God, free will, soul, and immortality. Unlike Kant, however, Nietzsche has no faith in such ideas. In fact, it is one of the major tasks of his naturalism to rid us of them. Nietzsche argues that, just as God is a manifestation of certain human beings' desire to be other than they are, so "things in themselves" and "essences" are manifestations of a desire that there be more than "mere appearance." For Nietzsche, however, there is nothing beyond appearance: "The antithesis of the apparent world and the true world is reduced to the antithesis 'world' and 'nothing'" (WP 567). And, for Nietzsche, the origin of the "real world" is not to be found outside appearance but within it. The noumenal world, Nietzsche argues in naturalistic fashion, has only ever been a guise of the phenomenal world: the human fantasy that there is

"another, better world." This is the meaning of Nietzsche's aphorism: "The 'real world,' however one has hitherto conceived it—it has always been the apparent world *once again*" (WP 566).<sup>31</sup> For Nietzsche, then, the question is not "what 'things in themselves' may be like, apart from our sense receptivity and the activity of our understanding. [...] The question is *whether there could not be many other ways of creating such an apparent world*" (WP 569, my italics). That is, the question is not what "other world" is responsible for the genesis of our metaphysical ideas but rather, how such ideas could have arisen from what we know about "this world." I will return to this notion below. At present, however, I want to attend to another possible response to these critiques on the part of those who advocate the SNK interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology.

Having acknowledged this strong anti-dualist tendency in Nietzsche, some proponents of the SNK view have tried to reconcile their accounts with it. Ruediger Grimm and Alan Schrift<sup>32</sup> both argue that, for Nietzsche, there is only an apparent dualism between the perspectival world of appearances and the real world of becoming or will to power (construed ontologically as equivalent to becoming).<sup>33</sup> Grimm argues that Nietzsche's ontological principle ("the world is will to power") is at the same time an epistemological

<sup>31</sup> Cf. TI III 6: "Any distinction between a 'true' and an 'apparent' world [...] is only a suggestion of decadence, a sign of *decline* of life. That the artist esteems appearance higher than reality is no objection to this proposition. For 'appearance' in this case means reality *once again*, only by way of selection, reinforcement, and correction. The tragic artist is no pessimist [...]."

<sup>32</sup> While surely neither Grimm nor Schrift would recognize theirs as "skeptical neo-Kantian" readings of Nietzsche, I hope to show that their accounts of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology reveal a basic commitment to this view.

<sup>33</sup> Grimm (1977) alternates between speaking of "will to power [as] a grand and monumental chaos which can only be characterized [...] by negative qualities" (2) and "the everchanging stream of becoming which is the world" (32). Schrift (1990) is more equivocal. He tends to interpret will to power as an epistemological principle (which names the process of interpretation, and thus of knowledge-production) (182-4) and becoming as an ontological principle ("the world as a Heraclitean flux of becoming" [135]). Yet he comes close to eliding the two notions where he claims that the plurivocity of perspectivism and will to power "reflect" the plurivocity of becoming (155) and speaks of "the perspectives of the text [of becoming] itself" (188).

principle ("all knowledge and interpretation are will to power"). That is, according to Grimm, Nietzsche construes the world as composed of power quanta whose aim is to enhance their power by subduing as many other power quanta as possible. This subduing, Grimm argues, is what Nietzsche calls "interpretation," and "all knowing or understanding is interpreting" (1979, 295). Thus, on Grimm's reading of Nietzsche, the world = will to power = the drive to subdue = interpretation = knowledge. Nietzsche's ontology and epistemology, then, are one and the same.

Schrift attempts a similar elision of will to power as an ontological principle (becoming) and will to power as an epistemological principle (perspectivism). He argues that since, for Nietzsche, the "*world is will to power—and nothing besides!*" (WP 1067, cited in Schrift 1990, 183) and "the world displays the universality of interpretation" (183), "we can conclude that 'will to power' is Nietzsche's name for the activity of interpretation," that "what Nietzsche names 'will to power' is [...] at once *an* interpretation and the *process* of interpretation itself" (183). Citing the *Genealogy of Morals* (II 12), Schrift arrives at Grimm's conclusions: (i) that the world is will to power, (ii) that will to power is interpretation, and, consequently, (iii) that the world *is* nothing but the continual process of subjugation (or "interpretation") of constituent quanta by other quanta.

As an attempt to come to grips with Nietzsche's anti-dualism, this seems to be a promising strategy. It appears to account for becoming, perspectivism, and will to power without positing any opposition between the world as it is known and the world as it really is. But neither Grimm nor Schrift consistently maintains this view. Despite his anti-dualist arguments, Grimm reverts to a dualistic picture of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology in his frequent characterizations of "the will to power [as] a grand and monumental chaos which can only be characterized, insofar as it can be characterized at all, by negative

qualities" (2),<sup>34</sup> and "reality [as] a chaos of power-quanta, about which any statement is already an interpretation or 'falsification' [...] a process of imposing a superficial order upon a chaotic reality" (30). Schrift similarly maintains that, for Nietzsche, "language [is] a human creation which remains essentially separate from 'reality,'" which is "a process of becoming" (132). He goes on to argue that:

Because the world, for Nietzsche, is marked by the complete absence of stasis or fixity, and because knowledge and language both require as their basic presupposition a notion of static identity over time, the conclusions which our intellectual faculties draw from the world can be nothing other than illusory (134).<sup>35</sup>

Such statements, by both Grimm and Schrift, appear to lapse back into the dualist, neo-Kantian view of perspectives as mediations, falsifications, or distortions of a noumenal world of becoming. Yet, upon further investigation, we find that even Grimm's and Schrift's apparently anti-dualist arguments implicitly rest upon a dualistic, neo-Kantian reading of Nietzsche. First, we might ask how one arrives at the view that "the world is a chaotic will to power, or continual becoming." If all perspectives are "falsifications," such an insight could not have arisen from within any particular perspective. Even were one able to hold many different perspectives at once, one would only be acquainted with many different stable and orderly worlds, and not a "chaos" or undifferentiated "becoming." In fact, it is only from an extra- or meta-perspectival position—that is, from a God's-eye view—that one might be able see the world as "a chaos of power-quanta" (Grimm 1977, 30). Schrift seems to have just such a position in mind when he writes: "Accepting the

<sup>34</sup> Similar claims are made on 18 and 30ff.

<sup>35</sup> This passage appears in a discussion of Nietzsche's early work on language and rhetoric. Many commentators (e.g. Clark, Wilcox, Leiter) hold that, while Nietzsche did maintain this skeptical position in his early work, he later gave it up in favor of a non-skeptical position. Schrift, however, considers this view of knowledge and language to be among the "basic insights" never given up by Nietzsche, and claims that one can "trace the genealogy of Nietzsche's *perspectival* account of knowledge back to his earliest rhetorical insights" (132). Indeed, throughout his discussion of these issues (Chap. 5), Schrift supplements quotations from Nietzsche's early work with those from later texts (WP, GM, TI) in an attempt to demonstrate the continuity of Nietzsche's view on these matters.

inherent limitations of each individual, perspectival optic, if we are to salvage the myth of objectivity at all it will be retained only in the form of a heuristic ideal, as a call for ‘panoptics’” (158).<sup>36</sup> But this is simply to resurrect the old ideal of a God’s-eye view, now no longer as an attainable goal, but as a *Grenzbegriff*.<sup>37</sup> And with this, we are solidly within the SNK interpretation, which conceives of human knowledge as caught within the limits of a particular perspective or perspectives, able to only imagine or dream of the real, true world beyond.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> This statement, of course, contains an ambiguity, for “panopticism” can be conceived in one of two ways: either as the successive inhabitation of every possible point of view, or the inhabitation of a single point of view that would encompass all others. That Schrift intends the latter is apparent from his allusion to Michel Foucault’s discussion of Bentham’s ideal penitentiary, the Panopticon (Foucault 1975, 170-228). The Panopticon represents the closest possible physical analogue to a God’s-eye view. It places prisoners individually in cells distributed around a circular perimeter, each cell observable from a central tower located at the center. Thus, while each prisoner has only a restricted purview, the guard in the tower is capable of seeing every cell and every prisoner. Moreover, by an effect of lighting, the guard is able to see the prisoners without being seen. Foucault writes: “The perfect disciplinary apparatus would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned” (173). This, then, is “panopticism,” the inhabitation of a position outside the spectrum of perspectives that is capable of encompassing this entire spectrum. (The notion of successive inhabitation of perspectives is discussed in Chapter 4.)

<sup>37</sup> As some have noted (Clark 1990, 48-9; Conway 1990; Nussbaum 1991, 110), Hilary Putnam’s “internalism” bears many similarities to Nietzsche’s perspectivism. Internalism is the view that “[t]here is no God’s Eye point of view that we can know or usefully imagine; there are only the various points of view of actual persons reflecting various interests and purposes that their descriptions and theories subserve” (Putnam 1981, 50). On this view, the question “*what objects does the world consist of?*” is a question that only makes sense to ask *within* a theory or description” (49). Yet, like Grimm and Schrift, Putnam lapses into speaking of an ideal limit of such internal knowledge. Richard Rorty has replied with a critique of Putnam similar to my critique of Grimm and Schrift. Rorty writes: “In the final sentence of [Reason, Truth and History], Putnam says that ‘The very fact that we speak of our different conceptions as different conceptions of rationality posits a Grenzbegriff, a limit-concept of ideal truth.’ But what is such a posit supposed to do, except to say that from God’s point of view the human race is heading in the right direction? Surely Putnam’s ‘internalism’ should forbid him to say anything like that” (1985, 27). For a more recent restatement of this critique of Putnam, see Rorty (1992). I discuss these issues further below.

<sup>38</sup> Mary Warnock also comes to this conclusion. Attributing to Nietzsche the view that “truth is the ideal toward which the scientist works, albeit without hope of total success” (1978, 62), she argues that, for Nietzsche, “what we can never reach is the complete or total explanation; but truth is this total explanation. It is what gets it right, what says how the world is. So the old sense of ‘fitting the facts’ has by no means been expunged” (58).

But there is also another neo-Kantian assumption implicit in Grimm's and Schrift's alleged anti-dualism, namely, the ontological counterpart to the notion of a God's-eye view: a pre-given world of becoming. On both Grimm's and Schrift's accounts, instead of the limited, selected, falsified world of a particular perspective, a God's-eye view would encounter "the rich ambiguity of the text/world," the world as an "infinite reservoir of possible signification" that "exceed[s] all attempts at totalization" (Schrift 1990, 196). In addition to the ideal of a God's-eye view, then, the motivation behind perspectivism, on Grimm's and Schrift's accounts, lies in the attempt at the *restoration of or fidelity to* this pre-given world of chaotic becoming. Schrift writes:

The doctrine of perspectivism is directed in part toward *restoring* the stimulating enigma and ambiguity of existence. The world holds no single, univocal truth, and *our cognitive methods should reflect this situation* (155, my italics).

[I]n calling for a pluridimensionality of interpretations, this approach *does "justice"* to the pluridimensionality and plurivocity of [...] the world (188, my italics).

In a similar vein, Grimm claims that Nietzsche's theory of knowledge is motivated by an attempt to be "*adequate to* a reality that is characterized by ceaseless change, contrariety, paradox, and contradiction" (1977, 16, my italics). He goes on to argue that Nietzsche succeeds in doing this by producing a relativistic theory of truth according to which a statement "can be both true and false for different individuals at the same time (or for the same individual at different times)" (1979, 297).<sup>39</sup>

We see, then, that, for both Grimm and Schrift, Nietzsche's perspectival theory of knowledge is motivated by two ideals: the ideal of a God's-eye view and the ideal of a pre-given world. On this account, perspectivism is the attempt, by limited creatures such as

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Babich (1994, 113): "The perspectivalist's point [...] is that a logic that opposes formal-analytic logic is likely to be more appropriate to a 'scientific' description of reality, once given Nietzsche's standards of rigor and the ambivalence of the real world [...] construed according to the full, ambiguous, chaotic sense Nietzsche gives to it."

ourselves, to achieve the infinitely complex and multi-faceted knowledge that would be adequate to an infinitely complex and multi-faceted world. Though our knowledge always falls short of these ideals, they nonetheless function as *Grenzbegriffe*. With such ideals, however, we find ourselves squarely within the SNK interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology, according to which there exists a world in itself of becoming that we can only ever catch a glimpse of and that our perspectival knowledge inevitably falsifies.

### 3.2.2 Problems with Horizontal Skepticism

I remarked above that the SNK account attributes to Nietzsche not only a vertical skepticism (regarding knowledge of the common substratum of all perspectives) but also a horizontal skepticism (regarding knowledge of the contents of other perspectives). It is led to this latter position insofar as it claims that what mediates a particular species' apprehension of the world is its "physico-psychological organization," the particular sensory and cognitive apparatus that is each species' evolutionary inheritance. Since different species are physiologically very different from one another and have different conditions of life and different life histories, it is claimed that their apprehensions of the world must be very different as well. Moreover, following Nietzsche's only published statement of perspectivism, the SNK view claims that different perspectives are *entirely* different and disjoint from one another. Nietzsche writes: "The human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these"; thus "it is a hopeless curiosity that wants to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be" (GS 374).

But there are problems with this form of skepticism, as well. Indeed, closely examined, horizontal skepticism turns out to rely upon the vertical skepticism that we have seen

Nietzsche to reject. This can be seen through an argument introduced by Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty, and taken up, in discussions of Nietzsche's perspectivism, by Alexander Nehamas and David Hoy.<sup>40</sup> The argument can be summarized as follows:

- (i) The notion of different perspectives presupposes a domain *on which* there are perspectives.
- (ii) Horizontal skepticism holds that these different perspectives are *entirely disjoint* from one another, that "every creature different from us [...] lives in a different world from that in which we live" (WP 565).
- (iii) Therefore, according to horizontal skepticism, the object-domain must be external to all perspectives, since otherwise the contents of different perspectives would overlap and the perspectives would not be disjoint from one another.<sup>41</sup>
- (iv) This domain external to all perspectives can only be the Kantian world in itself of vertical skepticism.<sup>42</sup>
- (v) But we have seen that Nietzsche rejects vertical skepticism.
- (vi) Therefore, it follows that he should reject horizontal skepticism as well.

Before dismissing horizontal skepticism, however, let us investigate it more closely. This sort of skepticism comes in a pseudo-skeptical version and genuinely skeptical version, both of which run into difficulties of the sort just mentioned. The pseudo-skeptical version claims that there *are* radically different perspectives, which we can know

<sup>40</sup> See Davidson (1974), Rorty (1972), Nehamas (1983) and Hoy (1986, 23-7).

<sup>41</sup> Davidson writes: "The failure of intertranslatability is a necessary condition for difference of conceptual schemes [what, on the SNK view, Nietzsche calls "perspectives"]"; the common relation to experience or the evidence is what is supposed to help us make sense of the claim that it is [...] schemes that are under consideration when translation fails. It is essential to this idea that there be something neutral or common that lies outside all schemes. This something common cannot, of course, be the *subject matter* of contrasting [schemes], or translation would be possible. [...] The neutral content waiting to be organized is supplied by nature [what, on the SNK view, Nietzsche calls "becoming"]" (1974, 190).

<sup>42</sup> See Rorty: "The notion of 'the world' as used in a phrase like 'different conceptual schemes carve up the world differently' must be the notion of something completely unspecified and unspecifiable—the thing-in-itself, in fact" (1972, 14; cf. 16).

nothing about, save that they exist. This is the view that Nietzsche seems to be proposing when he writes:

It is obvious that every creature different from us senses different qualities and consequently lives in a different world from that in which we live [...]; to demand that our human interpretations and values should be universal and perhaps constitutive values is one of the hereditary madnesses of human pride (WP 565).<sup>43</sup>

The problems with this view are similar to the problems involved with the very posit of a realm of "things in themselves." If it is true that we are entirely cut off from knowing about perspectives other than our own, what justifies even the supposition that such perspectives exist? If we are justified in claiming that such other perspectives exist, and if we are justified in calling them "perspectives," it appears that we are not as cut off from them as horizontal skepticism would lead us to believe. Indeed, such characterizations seem to indicate that we know a good deal about these "other perspectives"—for instance, that they are arrangements of the world, that these arrangements are specifiably different from our own, etc.

In Nietzsche's defense, it might be argued that he is making an empirical, rather than *a priori*, claim about different perspectives. Stack (1991), for example, has argued that Nietzsche's notion of different species-perspectives is the result of biological inquiries and retrospective evolutionary hypotheses. That is, Nietzsche might be seen to have arrived at his perspectivism by observing such things as the different visual systems of humans and flies, and then speculating about the evolutionary development of these systems.<sup>44</sup> Thus, with Stack, one could argue that Nietzsche is only claiming that, in this case, a fly sees the world differently than does a human, and that such a visual system functions together with

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. OTL 86.

<sup>44</sup> The example is mine. Stack provides no such specific instances.

the other characteristics of the fly to produce an overall "organization" that has benefits for the survival of flies as a species.

Rather than reinforcing the case for horizontal skepticism, however, this empirical interpretation of perspectivism serves to dissolve it. For this interpretation not only claims that we know that other perspectives exist; it also specifies just how such perspectives differ from our own, and thus cannot be said to be genuinely skeptical with regard to these other perspectives.<sup>45</sup> Such an interpretation acknowledges, in effect, that, while there are important differences between the various species, there are also important similarities and continuities, that these differences are differences of degree and not of kind, and thus that there is nothing about different species or their perspectives that remains in principle unavailable to our inquiry.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, such an understanding of perspectivism no longer has any use for the notion of an original world in itself of "becoming" or "universal flux" (Stack 1991, 41). The hypothesis that certain creatures originally perceived such a world and consequently perished (41) should, on this empirical view, be conceived as a hypothesis about a failed interpretation (i.e., one not conducive to survival) rather than a hypothesis about what the world is really like.

The genuinely skeptical version of perspectivism attempts to get around such problems. Instead of claiming that there *are* different perspectives, it claims only that there *might be*, and that we cannot rule out this possibility.<sup>47</sup> This is what Nietzsche seems to have in mind when, in *The Gay Science*, he writes:

<sup>45</sup> For a similar argument, see Nehamas (1983, 476).

<sup>46</sup> See Nehamas (1983, 480-1).

<sup>47</sup> Daniel W. Conway (1990, 98) argues that this is Nietzsche's position. He claims that this kind of "epistemological agnosticism" is a form of "anti-realism," the rejection of a world in itself apart from every perspective. But this is not the case, for to be "agnostic" about the existence of a world in itself is quite different than to be "anti-" such a world. It seems that, because Conway begins with a dualistic, Kantian picture of epistemology and ontology, he is led to believe that the only way of avoiding the trap of metaphysical realism (which asserts the existence of a world in itself) is to restrict oneself, *à la* Kant, to a description of "the human perspective"—a strategy he calls "anti-realism" (96 and *passim*) or "internal realism"

How far the perspective character of existence extends [...] cannot be decided even by the most industrious and most scrupulously conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of its analysis the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these. We cannot look around our own corner: it is a hopeless curiosity that wants to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be [...] we cannot reject the possibility that [the world] *may include infinite interpretations* (374).<sup>48</sup>

Like all genuinely skeptical arguments, this construal of perspectivism achieves its force by foreclosing definitive refutation, requiring potential objections to enter into its terms in order to refute them. That is, for one to prove that there are no other perspectives, one would have to inhabit just such a perspective—a meta-perspective that could survey the surrounding world. Thus, in proving that there is only one perspective, one would, in effect, prove that there are two.

According to Stack (despite the anti-skeptical implications of his empirical construal of perspectivism), Nietzsche holds this genuinely skeptical position with regard to other perspectives. Indeed Stack claims that Nietzsche's horizontal skepticism foreshadows recent discussions “of the limits of scientific (and, hence, *a fortiori*, common sense) knowledge of reality” (1991, 41-2). In defense of this claim, Stack offers a citation from Nicholas Rescher, whose skepticism, Stack claims, “virtually replicates Nietzsche's standpoint” (42).<sup>49</sup> Rescher writes:

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(107n28). Conway holds that either *to affirm* or *to deny* the existence of a world in itself amounts to the same thing, since such rejection could only be made from a position outside of all perspectives. The only solution, he argues, is to take a middle course: to remain *agnostic* about the existence of a world in itself and thus not commit oneself either way. Conway's Kantian prejudice bars him from considering the naturalistic, non-dogmatic, anti-dualist, and anti-realist solution I present below. Anti-realism in this sense is not an agnostic attitude about the existence of a world in itself, but the position that the very posit of a world in itself is slanderous, vacuous, ineffable, and without explanatory purpose. (Oddly enough, Conway calls upon Davidson's and Rorty's arguments against the scheme/content distinction [97] and Nelson Goodman's argument against the mystic [107n30], though it seems to me that these arguments serve to dismantle the very dualistic framework that would allow an “epistemological agnosticism.”)

<sup>48</sup> Cf. WP 616.

<sup>49</sup> In the same paragraph, and also in a later essay (1992), Stack cites Quine's work on “naturalized epistemology,” regardless of the fact that Quine's position is directed *against*

We have no decisive way of discriminating real from apparent truth, of distinguishing between *our* truth and *the* truth .... Once we acknowledge that a prospect of incompleteness and a presumption of ... incorrectness attaches to our present picture of the world, we can no longer subscribe to the idea that the world really exists as we conceive it. And ... we can no longer adopt the view that ... our world-picture depicts 'the real world'—the world as it actually is (Rescher 1982, 258-9; cited in Stack 1991, 42).

According to Stack, this view is Nietzsche's as well.

But this cannot be the case. We saw above that Nietzsche categorically rejects the distinction between a "real" and an "apparent" world, the notion that there exists, apart from our knowledge of appearance, a "world as it actually is." Of course Nietzsche acknowledges that only a God's-eye perspective could refute the skeptic once and for all, and that such a view would lead him back into the skeptic's dualism. He realizes that all he can do is offer plausible reasons why one should not adopt this dualism, and provide an alternative theory that does not require it. This is exactly what Nietzsche does; and his strategy is entirely naturalistic. He claims that, for a naturalistic philosopher like himself, the distinction between reality and appearance and the posit of a noumenal world are pernicious and superfluous. Against this view, he offers an anti-dualistic conception of perspectival knowledge according to which perspectives are interpretations that simply re-interpret those perspectives already on hand. That is, perspectives do not impose form upon a pre-given content, but rather re-formulate previous formulations. Each of these formulations marks out a relatively distinct "world," which, however, is never entirely disjoint from other co-existing "worlds." Thus, Nietzsche shows that one need not and should not posit an unbridgeable gap either between perspective and world or between one perspective and another. And with this, he rejects both vertical and horizontal skepticism.

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precisely the skepticism for which Stack is arguing. Quine's "naturalized epistemology" is an attempt to do away with the notion of first philosophy, which is necessary for skepticism regarding science. Instead, Quine argues, philosophy is simply empirical psychology, a part of natural science (1968). Furthermore, for Quine, it makes no sense to say what reality is really like construed apart from every theory (1969a).

I will more fully elaborate this naturalistic account of perspectivism in the next chapter. First, however, we need to take a look at the other neo-Kantian interpretation of perspectivism, one that claims to avoid the skeptical problems encountered within the neo-Kantian view just discussed.

### 3.3 The Anti-Skeptical Neo-Kantian (ASNK) Interpretation of Nietzsche's Epistemology and Ontology

Nietzsche scholarship has recently seen the proposal of a different sort of neo-Kantian view, one that attempts to read Nietzsche not as a skeptic but as an empirical realist. This view has been proposed, most influentially, by Maudemarie Clark and, more recently, by Brian Leiter. Both of these scholars present an interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology that claims to be anti-skeptical, while remaining "neo-Kantian."<sup>50</sup>

This anti-skeptical neo-Kantian (ASNK) account arises out of a series of interpretive decisions different from those of the SNK view. While the skeptical view claims to discover, throughout Nietzsche's corpus, the same basic conception of truth and knowledge, the anti-skeptical view argues that Nietzsche commits himself to different conceptions of truth and knowledge at different stages of his career, and that only in the later texts (the published works from the *Genealogy of Morals* on) does he arrive at his "mature" view.<sup>51</sup> While the skeptical account supports itself through research into the historical origins of Nietzsche's position, the anti-skeptical account is formulated through textual analysis alone. Indeed, the latter bases itself almost entirely on a single passage—*Genealogy of Morals* III 12—which, it argues, is the "only" (Clark 1990, 128), or at least

<sup>50</sup> See Clark (1990, 138-35 and passim) and Brian Leiter (1994). While Leiter does not directly claim the designation "neo-Kantian," he does explicitly endorse Clark's periodization of Nietzsche's texts and her general position on perspectivism (335-36). Moreover, his argument concludes that, with the doctrine of perspectivism, Nietzsche "is merely rehashing familiar Kantian themes, minus the rigor of Kant's exposition [which ...] is not a problem, particularly since Nietzsche's primary concerns lie elsewhere" (351).

<sup>51</sup> See Clark (1990, chaps 1-4) and Leiter (1994, 335-36).

the "primary" (Leiter 1994, 343), statement of the "mature" Nietzsche's perspectival theory of knowledge. Since this passage makes no reference to perspectivism as a doctrine about the different "physico-psychological" constitutions of different species, the anti-skeptical interpretation relegates to an earlier stage the passages in which Nietzsche seems committed to such a position. Instead, following the formulation laid out in its privileged passage, the ASNK account construes perspectivism as presenting an analogy between certain obvious features of human vision and less immediately obvious features of human knowing.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.3.1 *Clark's ASNK Account*

Once again, Clark's and Leiter's accounts of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology claim to be both anti-skeptical and neo-Kantian. They are anti-skeptical insofar as they acknowledge that, in his "mature" period, Nietzsche rejects the notion of a thing in itself (or world in itself) as contradictory, as something that is supposed to be at once ineffable and explanatory.<sup>53</sup> Yet, without the notion of a thing in itself, and thus the distinction between phenomenal and noumenal worlds, one is led to wonder how this interpretation can legitimately be called *neo-Kantian*. The answer is not entirely clear. While Clark, for instance, consistently maintains that Nietzsche's "mature" view of truth, knowledge, and perspectivism is "neo-Kantian," she rarely explains what she takes this designation to mean. The most explicit passage runs as follows:

[Those] who want to reject the whole concept of the thing-in-itself as contradictory, but who follow Kant otherwise concerning truth—that is, in denying the Cartesian claim about the kind of truth science can give us [i.e., truth as correspondence to things-in-themselves<sup>54</sup>]—should admit that truth is independent of our cognitive capacities—that our capacities might not be sufficient, even in principle, to determine what the truth is in some

<sup>52</sup> See Clark (1990, 128-35) and Leiter (1994, 344-47).

<sup>53</sup> See Clark (1990, 46-7) and Leiter (1994, 340).

<sup>54</sup> See Clark (1990, 54-55).

cases<sup>55</sup>—and insist only that truth cannot be independent of our cognitive interests, of our best standards of rational acceptability. This neo-Kantian position on truth is the one I shall attribute to Nietzsche. As I will interpret him, Nietzsche agrees with Kant that we cannot know things-in-themselves [...] Nietzsche is anti-Kantian, however, in that he denies the very conceivability of the thing-in-itself. It nevertheless seems appropriate to call his position “neo-Kantian” because I believe he arrived at it through his acceptance of, and long reflection upon, Kant’s denial of our knowledge of things-in-themselves, and that he was the first of many who criticized the whole idea of the thing-in-itself to draw the correct conclusion concerning our concept of truth from this criticism: that its content does not go beyond what I have called “the minimal correspondence theory of truth,” and that it does not allow us to make sense of the possibility that a theory that fully satisfied our cognitive interests could still be false (1990, 60-1).

Reading this passage along with those it alludes to, we can delineate three important features of Clark’s ASNK position. First, it rejects “the whole concept of the thing-in-itself” and thus also the Cartesian claim that we can know things in themselves and that truth requires correspondence with things in themselves. Having rejected the entire notion of things in themselves, Clark’s neo-Kantian view resolves to restrict itself to “phenomenal reality” (58, 60) as the only realm about which it makes sense to talk. Second, this rejection of things in themselves is said to lead to “the minimal correspondence theory of truth.” Though presented as a version of Alfred Tarski’s complex “semantic theory of truth” (32), Clark’s “minimal correspondence theory” is simply the “trivially true” (32) theory that follows from “common sense realism,” which holds that “the world has its own, extra-mental existence,” that “our beliefs are about [this] independently existing world,” and that “they can be true only if they correspond to it, that is, get it ‘the way it is’” (39). Such a position, Clark claims, is necessary in order to reject “subjective idealism,” the view that “nothing exists except ideas or representations” (38). Were one to accept “subjective idealism,” one would be warranted in accepting a full-fledged coherence theory of truth, “which takes truth to consist in a relation among beliefs or representations, rather

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<sup>55</sup> See Clark (1990, 59-60).

than a relation between beliefs and the world" (34).<sup>56</sup> But Clark suggests that, while coherence is a reasonable *criterion* for truth (34-5), correspondence (in the common sense realist sense) better satisfies our "intuitions" as to the *nature* of truth (39). Thus, truth consists in the "common sense" relation between beliefs and an independently existing world (37-40).

Thus far, it is not easy to see what is "Kantian" about this "common sense realism" that rejects the very idea of the thing in itself. However, a third feature of Clark's description provides the key to what is "Kantian" about her position—and indeed shows it to be more "Kantian" than Clark would like to believe. This third feature is the distinction between "cognitive capacities" and "cognitive interests," and the claim that truth and phenomenal reality are independent of our "cognitive capacities" but not independent of our "cognitive interests." Clark is eager to make this distinction because, in order to remain *Kantian* (i.e., against subjective idealism), she requires something to serve as external to beliefs or representations; and yet, it seems, in order to be *neo-Kantian*, this "something" cannot be the thing in itself. Having rejected the distinction between appearance and thing in itself, Clark claims that there is still an important intra-phenomenal distinction between the world as it is grasped by our "cognitive capacities" and the world as it is desired by our "cognitive interests."

The notion of "cognitive capacities" is nowhere fully explicated by Clark; but, from what can be gathered from her use of the term, it seems to describe the kind of cognitive apparatus we humans have: one that is dependent for knowledge upon a faculty of "sensibility" that has limited power, finite existence, and is bound to a particular place and time. "Cognitive interests," according to Clark are "the cognitively relevant properties we want from a theory or set of beliefs *other than truth*," "what we would want [...] under

<sup>56</sup> Also see Clark (1990, 34-39).

ideal conditions for inquiry for beings like ourselves" (48). Such properties, according to Clark, include simplicity, comprehensiveness, completeness, consistency, predictive power, plausibility, etc.<sup>57</sup>

Once again, Clark's thesis is that truth and phenomenal reality can and do outstrip our "cognitive capacities" but cannot and do not outstrip our "cognitive interests."<sup>58</sup> In support of this claim, Clark offers the following simple example: although "every object of experience is a determinate extensive magnitude," "we clearly do not have the capacity to determine the exact value" of such magnitudes, "since we do not have the power to make infinitely fine discriminations."<sup>59</sup> "I therefore believe we should conclude," Clark writes, "that phenomenal reality and its corresponding truth are independent of our cognitive capacities" (59-60).

Yet, despite Clark's assertion that this distinction is purely intra-phenomenal, requiring no commitment to a thing in itself or noumenal world, I think we can see that this is not the case, and that her view does indeed require such a commitment. According to Clark's argument, we have "no basis for ruling out the possibility of beings with observational capacities superior to our own, who would therefore be capable of verifying theories that are superior to ours, in the sense of better able to explain the observations we are capable of making" (58). Thus, we are led to posit a set of beings ( $B$ ) with observational powers greater than our own ( $B^2 \dots B^n$ ) such that, even those terminal beings ( $B^n$ ) would not cognize "phenomenal reality and its corresponding truth," but would only approach the ideal limit of "infinitely fine discrimination." But what could this limit of "infinitely fine discrimination" be except the ideal of a God's-eye view? And what could a "phenomenal reality" be that outstripped all possible cognition except a world in itself, a pre-given

<sup>57</sup> See Clark (1990, 48).

<sup>58</sup> See Clark (1990, 57-61).

<sup>59</sup> This example derives from work on Kant by William Harper and Charles Parsons.

world? Indeed, this is just what Clark offers with her claim that “our beliefs are about an independently existing world [and] they can be true only if they correspond to it, that is, get it ‘the way it is’” (39).

Instead of the “common sense realism” and “minimal correspondence theory” Clark claims to support, this view actually presents us with the “metaphysical realism” and “metaphysical correspondence theory” she claims to reject. “Metaphysical realism” and the “metaphysical correspondence theory” are, respectively, the doctrines that “reality is something-in-itself, that its nature is determinately constituted independently of us” and “the claim that truths must correspond to the world (or reality) as it is *in itself*” (40-1). But this is precisely what Clark presents us, insofar as she envisions an ideal reality and truth that, in principle, escape the grasp of any being but one with immaculate perception. Though Clark writes that “truth is a matter of getting the world ‘the way it is’” (39), she goes on to claim that “the way things are is independent of human cognitive capacities” (58), and thus that the truth about the world always escapes our grasp. This conclusion undercuts her central aim: to argue against the skeptical “falsification thesis,” the view that our knowledge inevitably falsifies the world as it really is.

Clark recognizes the possibility of such a criticism but regards it as illegitimate. In a discussion of the “metaphor of perspective,” she writes:

The perspectivist metaphor does invite us to think of a thing that is independent of the perspectives on it. If the same thing can be seen from different perspectives, its existence is not reducible to the existence of representations. It must be an extra-mentally existing thing, a thing with its own foothold in reality. Such a thing has *existence in itself*, as opposed to having the kind of existence [that subjective idealists] would grant it: existence as a representation or appearance, *existence in relation to a mind*. However, this does not make it a thing-in-itself. The possession of extra-mental existence (*existence in itself*) is neither necessary nor sufficient for being a thing-in-itself. What is required is rather an *essence in itself*, an essence or nature that is independent of what it can appear to be. The affirmation of an independently existing thing (common sense realism) will seem to affirm a thing-in-itself (metaphysical realism) only if one conflates the thing/appearance and the reality/appearance distinctions (136).

Once again, Clark stresses that she advocates only an intra-phenomenal distinction and not the distinction between phenomena and noumena. Yet the distinction between existence in itself and essence in itself is insufficient to block the charge of metaphysical realism and a commitment to things in themselves. Clark's view that "possession of extra-mental existence (*existence in itself*) is neither necessary nor sufficient for being a thing-in-itself" does not receive support from Kant. Kant might well grant her point that, construed as an "essence in itself"—something with "an essence or nature that is independent of what it can appear to be"—the notion of the thing in itself is contradictory by definition, since it would designate a thing that is said to have a determinate nature even though it is impossible say just what that determinate nature is. But Kant's point is that, while it cannot be said to have a determinate nature (since it is independent of all phenomenal construal), the thing in itself must nonetheless exist as a bare posit in order for us to maintain that our representations are representations *of* something that is not itself a representation.<sup>60</sup> That is, for Kant, the thing in itself is not a *substantive* notion about the *nature* or *essence* of extra-phenomenal reality but a *formal* notion about the necessary *existence* of such a reality: though we cannot

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<sup>60</sup> Kant writes: "though we cannot *know* these objects as things in themselves, we must yet be in a position to *think* them as things in themselves; otherwise we should be landed in the absurd conclusion that there can be appearance without anything that appears" (1871/87, Bxxvi); it "follows from the concept of an appearance in general [that] something which is not in itself an appearance must correspond to it. For appearance can be nothing by itself, outside our mode of representation. Unless, therefore, we are to move constantly in a circle, the word appearance must be recognized as already indicating a relation to something, the immediate representation of which is, indeed, sensible, but which, even apart from the constitution of our sensibility [...] must be something in itself [...] There results the concept of a noumenon. It is not indeed in any way positive, and is not a determinate knowledge of anything, but signifies only the thought of something in general, in which I abstract everything that belongs to the form of sensible intuition" (A 251-52); "The concept of a noumenon is thus a merely *limiting concept*, the function of which is to curb the pretensions of sensibility; and it is therefore only of negative employment. At the same time, it is no arbitrary invention; it is bound up with the limitation of sensibility, though it cannot affirm anything positive beyond the field of sensibility" (A 255/B 310); finally, in the A edition, Kant calls "the transcendental object" "the completely indeterminate thought of *something* in general." While there are some differences between the notions of the "thing in itself," the "noumenon," and the "transcendental object," Kant's point with regard to all of them is that they are merely formal, limiting notions and not substantive, determinate things.

say *what* lies beyond the world as we conceive it, we must say *that* there is such a reality. Clark's "existence in itself," then, is perfectly compatible with Kant's conception of the thing in itself; and she thus commits herself to the same form of metaphysical realism as does Kant.

It should be said that Clark's notion of "cognitive interests" and her claim that it makes no sense to say that truth and phenomenal reality might outstrip these "interests" gesture toward the sort of anti-dualist, coherentist view of truth and belief developed most recently by Davidson and Rorty, and, I think, prefigured by Nietzsche.<sup>61</sup> Clark wants to say that truth cannot be anything over and above that which satisfies the "cognitive interests" embodied in our system of beliefs because it is internal to this system, "outside" of which nothing could be considered by us to be "true." Yet Clark's "common sense realism" and her notion that "the truth about phenomenal reality might differ from what we can even in principle verify" (59) are incompatible with Davidson's and Rorty's anti-dualistic coherentism. For Davidson and Rorty, "the world" is simply "the unquestioned vast majority of our beliefs," "a name for the objects that inquiry at the moment is leaving alone: those planks in the boat which are at the moment not being moved about" (Rorty 1972, 13, 15). This anti-dualist picture cannot endorse Clark's "common sense realist" "intuitions" about the world as an "existence in itself" or about truth as the attempt of belief to correspond to such a world. Rorty writes that the "notion of the world [... as] a hard, unyielding, rigid *être-en-soi* which stands aloof, sublimely indifferent to the attentions we lavish upon it [...] is an obsession rather than an intuition" (13). In a similar vein, Davidson writes: "Nothing [...], no *thing*, makes sentences and theories true: not experience, not surface irritations, not the world, can make a sentence true" (1974, 194).

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<sup>61</sup> See Davidson (1974) and Rorty (1972).

In support of his anti-dualist view, Rorty criticizes Hilary Putnam in a manner that is instructive for the present discussion. On the one hand, Rorty argues, Putnam advocates an "internalist" view, according to which "we can only hope to produce a more rational *conception* of rationality or a better *conception* of morality if we operate from *within* our tradition"; yet, on the other hand, Putnam thinks that we must posit "a *Grenzbegriff*, a limit-concept of ideal truth," "an ideal terminus [...] a *true* conception of rationality, an ideal morality, even if all we ever have are our conceptions of these" (Putnam 1981, 216; quoted in Rorty 1985, 27). Objecting to this latter conception, Rorty writes: "But what is such a posit supposed to do, except to say that from God's point of view we are headed in the right direction? Surely Putnam's 'internalism' should forbid him to say anything like that" (27).<sup>62</sup> This is precisely the criticism I have been levelling against Clark; for, on the one hand, Clark wants to hold that truth and reality simply characterize something about our system of beliefs as a whole, while, on the other hand, she wants to claim that those beliefs must attempt to correspond to an external reality that is unreachable for us but that nevertheless functions as a *Grenzbegriff*. Though Clark's "neo-Kantianism" attempts to do away with the epistemological ideal of a God's-eye view and the ontological ideal of a pre-given-world, her commitment to "common sense realism" and the opposition between "cognitive capacities" and "cognitive interests" serve to reinstate those ideals.

These ideals reappear in Clark's treatment of perspectivism. As mentioned above, the ANSK view arrives at its account of the "mature" Nietzsche's perspectivism through an analysis of *Genealogy of Morals* III 12. It claims that the central feature of this passage (and thus of perspectivism) is the development of an analogy between the obvious features

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<sup>62</sup> Donald Davidson voices a similar criticism of Putnam's view. He writes: "One suspects that, if the conditions under which someone is ideally justified in asserting something were spelled out, it would be apparent either that those conditions allow the possibility of error or that they are so ideal as to make no use of the intended connection with human abilities" (1989, 307). For a more recent re-statement of Rorty's critique of Putnam, see Rorty (1992).

of human vision and less obvious features of human knowing. Before proceeding, let me cite the passage under consideration.<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche writes:

“[O]bjectivity” [ought to be] understood not as “contemplation without *interest*” (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but as the ability *to control* one’s Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge. Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a “pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject”; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as “pure reason,” “absolute spirituality,” “knowledge in itself”: these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes a seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowing”; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity,” be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this—what would that mean but to *castrate* the intellect?—<sup>64</sup>

In her treatment of this passage, Clark argues that Nietzsche is making the following point: just as human seeing is always a seeing-from-somewhere, a seeing-from-a-particular-perspective, so, too, is knowing always a knowing-from-somewhere, a knowing that must involve a particular “cognitive perspective” (1990, 128-30). Both seeing and knowing depend on “something about the subject” (133).<sup>65</sup> On the visual side of the analogy, that “something” is the viewer’s “perspective,” the “specific spatial relation—a matter of distance and angle”—[that] always obtains between the eye and the object it sees, a relation that affects how the object looks” (129). On the cognitive side of the analogy, Clark contends, that “something” is “our corpus of beliefs, what we believe at a particular

<sup>63</sup> Here, I present the passage as it is cited by Clark and Leiter, who cite the Kaufmann translation, which I find misleading. For my own translation of the passage, see Chap. 4.

<sup>64</sup> Leiter cites the passage in full, while Clark cites only the portion of the passage beginning with “Henceforth ...”

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Clark (1990, 130).

time" (130).<sup>66</sup> Thus, on this interpretation, perspectivism is meant to draw our attention to the fact that "how things look to us intellectually in any situation—how we are justified in interpreting them—depends on 'where we're at,' that is, on what we already believe" (130). For Clark, then, perspectivism is, in part, a holistic, coherentist "rejection of Cartesian foundationalism" concerning belief and justification (130).

Perspectivism amounts to the claim that we cannot and need not justify our beliefs by paring them down to a set of unquestionable beliefs that all rational beings must share. This means that all justification is contextual, dependent upon other beliefs held unchallengeable for the moment, but themselves capable of only a similarly contextual justification (130).

We saw above that, while Clark's notion of "cognitive interests" seems to sanction a coherentist, holistic view of knowledge and truth, her "common sense realism" and her notion that phenomenal reality and truth outstrip our cognitive capacities reinstate a realist, correspondence theory of truth, according to which our beliefs are true only if they correspond to an independently existing reality. Clark makes a similar move in her discussion of perspectivism. Having argued that perspectivism advocates a holistic, coherentist view of the justification of belief, she continues:

Although this anti-foundational account of perspectivism is plausible to a point, it seems far from the whole story. It leaves too much of Nietzsche's perspectivist passage unexplained and leaves perspectivism without obvious relation to truth (131).

Once again, Clark's asserts that coherence and holism are insufficient to account for truth. And yet, she argues, Nietzsche's passage does have something to say about truth: "perspectivism [is] a rejection of the metaphysical correspondence theory of truth, the

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<sup>66</sup> Clark seems to ignore what are clearly more central notions in the passage, namely the notions of "affect," "will," and "the active and interpreting forces." These do not seem obviously reducible to "our system of beliefs." Moreover, while, clearly, one can consecutively inhabit a number of different visual perspectives, it does not seem that one can consecutively inhabit a number of different systems of beliefs. Though one can perhaps experiment with more modest shifts in one's system of beliefs, one certainly cannot inhabit a number of *totally different* systems of beliefs, for reasons cogently argued by Davidson (1974) and Rorty (1972). In any case, Clark does not sufficiently draw out the analogy on these crucial issues, nor is it clear that this is the analogy that Nietzsche has in mind.

understanding of truth as correspondence to things in themselves" (131). When Nietzsche claims that there is no such thing as "an eye turned in no particular direction," but "only a perspective seeing, *only a perspective knowing*" (GM III 12), he is declaring the impossibility of a "view from nowhere" (129ff). According to Clark, this is a rejection of the idea that we could know things in themselves, since the notion of "what things are in themselves [is] the cognitive equivalent of what they look like 'in themselves,' what they would look like from nowhere" (132). Clark writes:

To call nonperspectival knowing an "absurdity and a nonsense" invites us to think of knowing things-in-themselves as equivalent to the recognizably absurd idea of seeing things from no perspective. [...] As there is nothing to see of a thing except what it looks like from various visual perspectives, there is nothing to know of it except how it is interpreted from various cognitive perspectives (132-3).

This acknowledgement that perspectivism amounts to a rejection of the notions of a "view from nowhere" and a "thing-in-itself" seems rather similar to the view I sketched in the previous chapter, according to which Nietzsche rejects the kindred notions of a "God's-eye view" and a "pre-given world." Yet there is a crucial difference. On Clark's view, perspectivism rules out the *possibility of our ever achieving* a "view from nowhere" or *knowing* a "thing-in-itself"; but this does nothing to rule out a commitment to the *existence* of such an epistemological position or ontological given.<sup>67</sup> In fact, as I have argued above, Clark's "common sense realism" and her notion that "phenomenal reality and its corresponding truth are independent of our cognitive capacities" (60) seem to commit her to the existence of a "view from nowhere" and "thing-in-itself" as *ideals* or *Grenzbegriffe*

<sup>67</sup> Clark claims that Nietzsche's perspectivist analogy not only shows that we cannot know things in themselves but that the very idea of things in themselves is incoherent (132). She reasons that, just as "there is [...] no way things look in themselves," so too "the aspects of [a thing's] intelligible character are aspects of how it would be interpreted from one or more of the cognitive perspectives on it. The intelligible character it has in itself is equivalent to its visual character when viewed from nowhere" (132-3). Nonetheless, for Clark, this means only that a thing has no "essence in itself," not that it has no "existence in itself" (136). I have argued above, however, that nothing distinguishes this notion of an unknowable, unspecifiable thing-that-exists-in-itself from the Kantian thing in itself.

rather than as actual human possibilities. Indeed, in her discussion of perspectivism, Clark reiterates her view that Nietzsche is committed to this "common sense realism" and the "minimal correspondence theory" that goes along with it. She writes:

Although perspectivism denies metaphysical truth, it is perfectly compatible with the minimal correspondence theory of truth [...] It even seems to require acceptance of this minimal theory, since the latter is what remains of truth once we reject what perspectivism rejects, namely, the thing-in-itself. Perspectivism thus amounts to a metaphorical expression of what I have called Nietzsche's neo-Kantian position on truth (135).

Clark's position is thus that, while Nietzsche's perspectivism supports an anti-foundationalism, coherentism, and holism with respect to *justification* and *belief*, it must support a "common sense realism" or "neo-Kantianism" with respect to *truth*. That is, it must grant that there is an independently existing world which it is the goal of belief to "hook onto" and "get right." Clark construes "the world" as the ultimate cause and goal of our beliefs; but it is a cause that remains ineffable and a goal that remains unattainable insofar as "phenomenal reality and its corresponding truth" always remain "independent of our cognitive capacities." Such a "world" can be nothing other than the thing in itself, a "pre-given-world" that could be adequately cognized only by a "God's-eye view."<sup>68</sup>

### 3.3.2 Leiter's ASNK Account

Brian Leiter has also recently presented a common sense realist, neo-Kantian interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectivism<sup>69</sup>; and his view runs into similar problems. Like Clark, he focuses on the *Genealogy of Morals* passage as the key to understanding perspectivism and Nietzsche's "mature" theory of knowledge generally. He agrees with Clark that the central feature of this passage is the analogy between vision and cognition. According to Leiter, Nietzsche's perspectivism is the doctrine that "knowing is like seeing

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Rorty (1972, 14-15).

<sup>69</sup> See note above on Clark, Leiter, and "neo-Kantianism."

in that both are essentially dependent on perspectives: interests and affects in the former case; distance, angle, background conditions, etc. in the latter" (1994, 344). Leiter argues that we have an "intuitive understanding" (345) of the optical side of the analogy that helps to elucidate the initially more obscure corresponding features on the cognitive side of the analogy.

His treatment of perspectivism begins, then, with an explication of the visual case. Four claims about seeing, Leiter proposes, are "uncontroversially [...] true": (i) that "necessarily, we see an object from a certain perspective," (ii) that "the more perspectives we enjoy [...] the better our conception of what the object is actually like will be," (iii) that "we will never exhaust all possible perspectives on the object of vision," (iv) and that "that there exists a catalogue of identifiable factors that would distort our perspective on the object" (344).

Implicit in Leiter's interpretation of perspectivism, then, is the "common sense realist" notion that there is an independently existing world which it is the goal of knowledge to represent with the least possible distortion. We can never fully grasp this world; but it is also never entirely out of our reach. Like Clark, who distinguishes between the independently existing world (or object) as an *existence in itself* and as an *essence in itself* (1990, 136), Leiter distinguishes between a "*transcendent* object, i.e. a thing-in-itself" and "the object of knowledge [... a] *thing itself (not in-itself)*" (350). While Leiter has little more to say about this distinction, he seems to agree with Clark that the object of knowledge as a "thing itself" (Clark's "existence in itself") is simply a bare posit which has no "determinate nature" (see Clark 1990, 41, 136) apart from how it can appear to the viewer/knower.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> At times, however, Leiter is less cautious than Clark, for whom the independently existing thing or world has no determinate nature but is simply a bare posit that helps us to avoid "subjective idealism." Leiter often claims that knowledge "must be adequate to" (351) "what the object is actually like" (344), its "actual nature" (345), "the object's actual [...]

But Leiter's "common sense realism" runs into problems akin to those encountered in our consideration of Clark's similar view. We find that, although it explicitly attempts to avoid them, Leiter's "common sense realism," like Clark's, is implicitly committed to the epistemological and ontological posits characteristic of metaphysical realism: the ideal of knowledge as a "God's-eye view" on a "pre-given world." Leiter's view that "what the object is actually like" will always exceed the sum of our "non-distorting perspectives" on it (346) seems simply to say that there exists a pre-given-world whose nature always escapes our grasp. Though he calls this a "real (but non-transcendent)" world (351), Leiter nonetheless holds that, in an important sense, the world always transcends our perspectives on it, that it *is* always more than we can ever *conceive* it to be. The world, it turns out, remains external to our beliefs and it alone determines them to be true or false.

As for Leiter's claim that there exists a catalogue of identifiable factors that could distort our visual and cognitive perspectives on the object (344, 346), we might ask where such a catalogue comes from? *From what standpoint or perspective* are such factors distorting? And what *is* it that they distort? There are only two possibilities: either there exists a meta- or non-perspective—a God's-eye view—from which one could judge the fidelity of our perspectives to a pre-given world; or such a catalogue is simply set up by some neighboring perspective, and thus cannot claim the obvious, unequivocal authority Leiter wants to grant it. Leiter opts for the former alternative. On the visual side of the analogy, he says that "from a conception of what the object is really like we can work out the conditions under which this visual nature is available and those under which its character will be distorted" (356n28). But where do we get this "conception of what the object is

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nature" (345), "what the object [...] is really like" (356n28), "the real (but non-transcendent) nature of objects" (351). These remarks seem to imply that Leiter conceives of the "thing itself" as what Clark calls an "essence in itself": a thing with a determinate nature independent of all knowers. Indeed, Leiter comes close to saying just this when he remarks that the "doctrine of perspectives" does "*not* seem committed" to the claim that "the object of vision has *no* determinate nature" (345, my italics).

really like"? Leiter denies that we can ever get a full picture of the object of vision, since "[n]ecessarily, we see an object from a particular perspective" and "[w]e will never exhaust all possible perspectives on the object of vision" (344). A "conception of what the object is really like," then, could only come from a God's-eye view. On the cognitive side of the analogy, Leiter claims that "distortion" is measured according to what Nietzsche calls the "terrible truth" that the world "has the fundamental character of will-to-power" and is "essentially amoral" (346, 356n27). Leiter thus construes Nietzsche as a realist for whom there exist better and worse perspectives judged according to their fidelity to a world whose "fundamental" or "essential" nature is "will to power." Moreover, on Leiter's account, Nietzsche is a *metaphysical* realist for whom the world-as-will-to-power is a pre-given world that always escapes our perspectival grasp (which always aims at, but still falls short of, the ideal of a God's-eye view).

In fact, Leiter unwittingly provides Nietzsche's reason for rejecting the notions of a God's-eye view and a pre-given-world. He acknowledges that, for Nietzsche, "it is our needs that interpret the world" (WP 481, cited on 356) but fails to draw Nietzsche's conclusions concerning the interpretation he himself proposes. Regarding the ideals of a "God's-eye view" and a "pre-given-world," Nietzsche argues that, although these ideals satisfy no empirical or systemic demands, they do satisfy the need and desire of certain human beings to be more-than-human and to live in another world. In more poetic formulation, they exhibit "life's nausea and disgust with life, merely concealed behind, masked by, dressed up as, faith in 'another' or 'better' life" (BT/SC 5).<sup>71</sup> Thus, Nietzsche agrees with Rorty that the common sense realist's notion of a world that exists independently of our perspectives or webs of belief "is an obsession rather than an

<sup>71</sup> Cf. GM III 28, TI III 6.

intuition" (Rorty 1972, 13),<sup>72</sup> an obsession that a particular perspective attempts to pass off as an intuition in order to promote its theological, ascetic, and metaphysical aims and purposes.<sup>73</sup> For Nietzsche, this ascetic perspective is wrong not because it "distorts" a pre-given world but because it fails to cohere with the naturalistic core of the modern intellectual conscience.

Above we saw that Clark attempts to mitigate her dualism with the more anti-dualist, coherentist claim that truth cannot outstrip our "cognitive interests." Leiter makes a similar move in an analysis of what he calls Nietzsche's "Doctrine of Epistemic Affectivity," the doctrine that "all knowing is mediated by particular interpretive needs (interests, affects)" (347). According to Leiter, this doctrine maintains that "human beliefs, sensibilities, practices, and dispositions are a condition of the very possibility of anything being true or knowable" (349). This remark seems to move Leiter's interpretation toward the Davidson-Rorty view that nothing could count as truth or falsity except what human beings generally count as such. This remark appears to argue against the metaphysical realist's global claim that truth might be entirely independent of our interests and beliefs.<sup>74</sup>

Yet, like Clark, Leiter wants to insure that this coherentist view does not result in idealism. He wants to distinguish his holistic conception of *belief* from a coherence theory of *truth*, which, he claims, results in the idealist thesis that truth is "nothing other than a matter of consensus" (348).<sup>75</sup> He argues against "vulgar idealism"—which holds that truth is "nothing other than what particular human interests take it to be" (350)—in favor of "Davidson's 'platitude'" that "'believing something does not in general make it true' [and]

<sup>72</sup> See also Rorty (1985, 32), where Rorty makes a similar point with explicit reference to Nietzsche.

<sup>73</sup> Recall that, for Nietzsche, scientific and philosophical positivism shares this goal ideal and, indeed, embodies it in its most esoteric form (see GM III 23-28).

<sup>74</sup> On metaphysical realism, see Leiter (1994, 350).

<sup>75</sup> The passage cited explicitly concerns "meaning" not "truth." But the surrounding text shows that Leiter wants this account of idealism about meaning to apply to truth as well.

its corollary: the community's believing something doesn't make it true either" (349). As for "vulgar idealism," few, if any, philosophers—and Nietzsche is not among them—believe that the world is the way any individual or group believes it to be. Such a notion is contested, however, not by reference to some absolute fact or non-belief, but by reference to another, wider set of beliefs, namely, the set of those beliefs currently held to be the most justified.<sup>76</sup> As for "Davidson's platitude," the reason that "believing something does not in general make it true" is that only *justified* belief is true; and, for Davidson, we justify beliefs by squaring them with the beliefs we already accept, not by comparing them with "reality" taken to be independent of all our beliefs.<sup>77</sup> "[N]othing can count as a reason for holding a belief except another belief," Davidson writes; and we therefore must "reject [...]" as unintelligible the request for a ground or source of justification of another ilk" (1981, 310).<sup>78</sup>

However, Leiter has a deeper reason for rejecting coherence as the measure of truth, one that puts him at odds with Davidson's and Rorty's coherentism, to which he, at times, appears sympathetic. Leiter wants to maintain that, while our beliefs are "conditions" of truth, they are not "constitutive" of truth (350, 348). He thus subscribes to what Rorty disparagingly calls the "realist intuition" "that there is a relation called 'making true' which is unlike 'justifying' in that it obtains between non-beliefs and beliefs rather than between

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Rorty (1979a, 276) and (1988b, 101). I discuss Nietzsche's attitude toward idealism in greater detail in the next chapter, section 4.4.5.

<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Davidson's statement of his "platitudes" is prefaced by his rejection of "the doctrine that the real and the true are independent of our beliefs" (1989, 305).

<sup>78</sup> Davidson goes on to cite, and concur with, Rorty: "nothing counts as justification unless by reference to what we already accept, and there is no way to get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence" (Rorty 1979, 178; cited in Davidson 1981, 123). Also cf. Davidson (1986, 165): "Beliefs are true or false," Davidson writes, "but they represent nothing"; and (1989, 303-4): "there is nothing interesting or instructive to which true sentences might correspond"; "we ought [...] to question the popular assumption that sentences, or their spoken tokens, or sentence-like entities or configurations in our brains, give up facts as entities that make sentences true, we ought to give up representations at the same time, for the legitimacy of each depends on the legitimacy of the other."

beliefs and other beliefs" (1992, 415). Leiter wants to maintain that there is something external to our system of beliefs ("the thing itself" [350], the "nature of objects" [351]) that makes them true or false. Yet one wonders how one comes to conceive of such a "something." Either it is itself a belief, in which case it cannot serve the special function of "making true," or it is an "intuition," which, Nietzsche would argue, is just a name for a theological belief that cannot be squared with the naturalism that pervades our belief-system as a whole.

I think we must conclude, then, that Clark's "existence in itself" and Leiter's "thing itself" can be nothing other than the thing in itself, which both agree that Nietzsche rejects. Leiter and Clark can equivocate that something qualifies as a "thing-in-itself" only if it is said to be "determinately constituted," which the "existence in itself" or "thing itself" is not. Yet, given that it is supposed to lie outside our belief system, one wonders how we are even able to posit the "existence" of such a "thing," let alone offer the negative characterization that it is "not determinately constituted." Such a posit would surely strike Nietzsche as the positivist equivalent of negative theology, according to which all characterizations, being merely human, fail to give us an adequate sense of divine being. Nietzsche would undoubtedly respond that such a posit is not only useless and superfluous but harmful, insofar as it serves to "condemn appearance" (WP 583), which, for him constitutes the natural world—"the only world there is" (EH IV 4).

### 3.4 Conclusion

Such, then, is the neo-Kantian account of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology, various forms of which have dominated discussion of these issues. I have argued that this view is unsatisfactory insofar as it commits Nietzsche to a world-conception that he explicitly rejects, namely, one that distinguishes "appearance" from "reality," the "true

world," or the "thing in itself." In rejecting this world-conception, I have argued, Nietzsche shows his commitment to a thoroughgoing naturalism, which seeks to explain all phenomena as this-worldly and thus rejects all attempts to maintain strict divisions between the this-worldly and the other-worldly. Such attempts Nietzsche considers to be nothing but metaphysical or theological; and, in the wake of "the death of God," he argues, such metaphysical-theological claims must strike the "intellectual conscience" as unjustified.

The neo-Kantian view considered in this chapter focused on the doctrine of perspectivism and drew from it a general account of Nietzsche's epistemology and ontology. Having provided a very different general account in Chapter 2, my task in the final chapter will be to develop a counter-interpretation of perspectivism that shows it to follow from and more finely articulate Nietzsche's naturalism and interpretive holism.

the concept of perspectivism of the Will to Power<sup>1</sup> to describe the later Nietzsche's "philosophical method" more adequately taken up by Heidegger in 1911,<sup>2</sup> by Gadamer in the 1930's,<sup>3</sup> by Derrida in the 1960's,<sup>4</sup> and by

### NIETZSCHE'S PERSPECTIVISM: THE UBIQUITY OF INTERPRETATION

*Knowing is not like a bridge that somehow subsequently connects two existent banks of a stream, but is itself a stream that in its flow first creates the banks and turns them toward each other in a more original way than a bridge ever could.*

—Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche III §12*

#### 4.1 Perspectivism: The Textual Evidence

Any interpretation of perspectivism confronts a peculiar difficulty: the sheer scarcity of explicit mention the doctrine receives in Nietzsche's texts, published and unpublished. The term "perspectivism" appears in only a single passage in the published work: in *The Gay Science* §354, where it is associated with "phenomenalism" but receives little explanation and is not claimed as a doctrine unique to Nietzsche. Even in *The Will to Power*, where the German editors saw fit to employ the term in a section heading (Third Book, I, d: "Biology of the Drive to Knowledge. Perspectivism"), "perspectivism" is mentioned only twice: in the oft-cited §481 and in §636. Given this, one is led to wonder whether it is legitimate to claim that perspectivism is a "doctrine" at all, let alone one that is central to Nietzsche's work.

Despite this difficulty, I think a good case can be made for considering perspectivism a doctrine and, indeed, one of the central doctrines of Nietzsche's later work. First of all (although perhaps least convincing), there is a critical precedent: the term was used as early

as 1906 by the German editors of *The Will to Power*<sup>1</sup> to describe the later Nietzsche's theory of knowledge; and it was subsequently taken up by Vaihinger in 1911,<sup>2</sup> by Heidegger in the 1930's,<sup>3</sup> by Morgan in the 1940's,<sup>4</sup> by Danto in the 1960's,<sup>5</sup> and by virtually every commentator since Danto's seminal work. More importantly, while Nietzsche rarely refers to "perspectivism" in doctrinal terms, the terms "perspective," "perspectival," and "perspectivity" appear with some frequency in Nietzsche's later texts (in about a dozen passages in the published works from 1882 on, and about two dozen passages in *The Will to Power*). Finally, and most importantly, the language of "perspective" appears in contexts that articulate something very important and unique in the later Nietzsche: namely, the notion that all natural beings are inextricably caught up within a nexus of competing world-views, each of which has their origin in particular physiological, psychological, historical, cultural, and political needs, desires, beliefs, and values.

I will say more about this in a moment. But a further proviso must still be added: while there are reasonable grounds for attributing to Nietzsche a "doctrine of perspectivism," this doctrine will always be something of a critical fabrication. That is, we must give up the desire, recently expressed by Daniel Conway, to distinguish between "Nietzsche's perspectivism"—the explication of "Nietzsche's position"—and "Nietzschean perspectivism"—the delineation of "a position that he could (or should) have held in light of his other insights" (1991, 103). However one characterizes "Nietzsche's doctrine of perspectivism," that characterization will always be underdetermined by the textual evidence. All one can do is fill out the few comments concerning "perspectivism," "perspective," and "perspectivity" in light of their contexts and of Nietzsche's other central

<sup>1</sup> In the aforementioned section heading.

<sup>2</sup> See Vaihinger (1911, 94).

<sup>3</sup> See Heidegger (1939, 199 and *passim*).

<sup>4</sup> See Morgan (1941, 273 and *passim*).

<sup>5</sup> See Danto (1965, chap. 3).

positions. Insofar as there are different conceptions of what those positions are, there will also be different accounts of perspectivism.

This is not to say that all accounts of perspectivism will be equally valid or equally good. Indeed, here, I argue for an interpretation of perspectivism that I believe is better than others. Nonetheless, it must be recognized that, in this situation, there are no "facts," no transparent, doctrinal statements against which to measure interpretations.

Interpretations of perspectivism can only be measured according to how well they articulate Nietzsche's comments on "perspective" within a whole that gives them a sense. As it turns out, on my account, this textual situation concerning perspectivism exemplifies a central feature of the doctrine itself: the proposition that this holistic relation of facts to interpretation, empirical evidence to system, part to whole obtains in every sphere of human inquiry—and beyond.

#### 4.2 Perspective and Affective Interpretation

I have argued in the preceding chapters that foremost among Nietzsche's concerns is a certain kind of naturalism, the epistemological and ontological consequences of which involve a rejection of the ideals of a God's-eye view and a pre-given world and a rejection of the distinction between appearance and the true world, reality, or the thing in itself. The task of the present chapter is to offer an account of perspectivism that is faithful both to Nietzsche's explicit texts on the matter and to this thoroughgoing naturalism.

In order to begin, then, we must find some clue that will connect Nietzsche's comments on "perspective" to this larger project. Such a clue appears, I think, in a notion that Nietzsche closely associates with "perspectivity": the notion of interpretation. To indicate this connection, let me re-cite the famous passage on perspectivity from the *Genealogy of*

*Morals*, paying close attention to the relationships between perspective and interpretation.

Nietzsche writes:

"[O]bjectivity" [ought to be] understood not as "contemplation without interest" (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but as the ability to have one's For and Against *under control* and to engage and disengage them, so that one knows how to employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations [*Perspektiven und Affect-Interpretationen*] in the service of knowledge. Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject"; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as "pure reason," "absolute spirituality," "knowledge in itself": these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces [*die aktiven und interpretirenden Kräfte*], through which alone seeing becomes a seeing-something, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing [*ein perspektivisches Sehen*], *only* a perspective "knowing" [*ein perspektivisches "Erkennen"*]; and the *more* affects [*je mehr Affekte*] we allow to speak about a thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can lend to the thing, the *more* complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this—what would that mean but to *castrate* the intellect?—(III 12).

Here we find, right alongside the notion of perspective, a notion of "affective interpretation." Indeed, Nietzsche intertwines the two notions, claiming that a perspective is constituted and directed by the deployment of a matrix of "active and interpreting forces," which allow something to appear as a particular something. A "perspective," then, would appear to be a horizon opened up by the operation of a particular "affective interpretation."<sup>6</sup>

In fact, sifting through the various texts on perspectivity, one finds a number of passages in which the language of perspective is closely linked with the language of interpretation.<sup>7</sup> In §357 of *The Gay Science*, for instance, Nietzsche alternately speaks of "the Christian interpretation" and "those Christian-ascetic moral perspectives." In §374 of

<sup>6</sup> See WP 616: "that every *elevation of man* brings with it the overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons—this idea permeates my writings." On the relation between horizons and perspectives, see Heidegger (1939, §§13, 19).

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., GS 357, 374; WP 5, 556, 565, 590, 616, 617, 678, 804.

the same text, he alternates between “perspective” and “interpretation” without differentiating between the two, at one point speaking of “the perspective character of existence,” at another of “all existence” as “essentially an interpreting existence”; here of the possibility of many different “perspectives,” there of the possibility of “*infinite interpretations*.” In a note from 1885-86, Nietzsche writes that “previous interpretations have been perspective evaluations by virtue of which we can survive in life” (WP 616). In a note from 1886-87, Nietzsche writes, at one point, of “our perspective ‘truths’ which belong to us alone” and, at another, of “our human interpretations and values” (WP 565). Finally, in another note from 1886-87, the terms are so imbricated as to become indissociable:

Whether the origin of our apparent “knowledge” is not to be sought solely in *older evaluations* which have become so much a part of us that they belong to our basic constitution? So that what really happens is only that *younger* needs grapple with the *results of the oldest needs*? The world seen, felt, interpreted [*ausgelegt*] as thus and thus so that organic life may preserve itself in this perspective of interpretation [*dieser Perspektive von Auslegung*]. Man is *not* only a single individual but one particular line of the total organic world. That *he* endures proves that a species of interpretation [*eine Gattung von Interpretation*] (even though accretions are still being added) has also endured, that the system of interpretation [*das System von Interpretation*] has not changed. “Adaptation.” Our “dissatisfaction,” our “ideal,” etc., is perhaps the *consequence* of this incorporated piece of interpretation, of our perspective point of view [*dieses einverleibten Stücks Interpretation, unseres perspektivischen Gesichtspunkts*]; perhaps organic life will in the end perish through it— (WP 678).

Regardless of the evolutionary hypothesis proposed in this passage,<sup>8</sup> the close connection it draws between perspective and interpretation is highly important. The basic “needs” and “evaluations” of an organism are said to form an “incorporated” “system of interpretation”

<sup>8</sup> Here, Nietzsche hypothesizes that the proper sphere of investigation concerning perspectives and interpretations is organic life as a whole. Elsewhere, he suggests that the proper sphere is that of the species (see GS 354, 374). Still elsewhere, he maintains that perspectives and interpretations are proper to intra-human groups such as master and slave, Christian and Dionysian, etc. (see, e.g., GM). I will argue below, that the best candidate is this third. For present purposes, suffice it to say that the passage under discussion is a hypothesis rather than a conclusion.

which gives the organism a particular "perspective point of view." "Perspectives," then, seem to be "outlooks" directed by "incorporated interpretations," which themselves are "systems of evaluation" made from the standpoint of particular "needs."

One finds, in fact, that the language of "interpretation" is far more common in Nietzsche than the language of "perspective." "Interpretation" terms play a central role in about a dozen passages in Nietzsche's published work and about three dozen passages in *The Will to Power*.<sup>9</sup> Virtually every sphere of human activity—from "morality," to "physics" and "natural science," to "rational thought" in general—is called, at one point or another, an "interpretation."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, for Nietzsche, "interpretation" is present wherever there is "meaning" and "value" at all.<sup>11</sup>

Given this, I want to suggest that commentators have been wrong to read Nietzsche's "perspective" language too rigidly (as describing the fixed bounds of a species' knowledge) and too literally or narrowly (as developing a simple analogy between seeing and knowing).<sup>12</sup> Instead, I will to argue that we should read Nietzsche's "perspective" language within the broader bounds of a general theory of interpretation.<sup>13</sup> Unlike the

<sup>9</sup> Leiter (1994, 343) also notes this, yet then disregards it in his construal of perspectivism. Moreover, he also disregards the fact that, in the passage that is so central to his analysis, Nietzsche explicitly links "perspectives" with "affective interpretations."

<sup>10</sup> On morality as interpretation, see GS 357; TI VII 1; WP 1, 5, 114, 228, 254, 258, 270. On physics and natural science as interpretation, see BGE 14, 22; WP 682, 689. On rational thought as interpretation, see WP 522.

<sup>11</sup> See GM II 12; WP 590, 604-6, 616.

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger (1939, 197ff) and Mark Fowler (1990 and 1991) also argue against the over-narrow construal of perspectivism as developing an ocular metaphor. Heidegger writes: "The 'perspective' is never the mere angle of vision from which something is seen; rather, this perspectival vista looks toward 'conditions of preservation/enhancement.' As conditions, the 'viewpoints' posited in such 'seeing' are of such kind that they must be reckoned *on* and reckoned *with*. They take the form of 'numbers' and 'measures,' that is, values" (1939, 197-8). Fowler writes: "too often, Nietzsche's ocular metaphors continue to deceive if only by obscuring the centrality that affects have in his theory of perspectivism and, accordingly, what we need is a thorough reinvestigation of the question: What, on Nietzsche's theory, is a perspective?" (1991, 115). Fowler goes on to suggest an account of "perspectivism" and "affect" that is very close to my own.

<sup>13</sup> Alan D. Schrift (1990, 145ff) also relates perspective and interpretation, though his account of this relation is somewhat different from my own.

notion of "perspective"—which, taken literally, runs into serious epistemological problems<sup>14</sup>—the notion of "interpretation" has a central place within a rich and venerable literary and philosophical tradition. Indeed, since Nietzsche's time, philosophers in the Continental and the analytic traditions have come to forge close connections between interpretation and epistemology. Both philosophical hermeneutics and the Quinian strand of analytic philosophy have come to argue that our knowledge is not an edifice built upon a foundation of indubitable beliefs, but rather is an interpretive web of mutually supporting beliefs and desires that is constantly being rewoven.<sup>15</sup> These philosophers argue that we are always already immersed in a world filled with significances that we pre-theoretically understand, and that the job of epistemology is to discover how particular sensory experiences, beliefs, and desires relate to our understanding as a whole, and vice versa.

As I have argued in the preceding chapters, Nietzsche agrees with both this turn from foundationalism to holism, and the turn from first philosophy to naturalism. And we have just seen that Nietzsche conceives of the understanding as always directed by one or another "interpretation," each of which opens up a particular horizon of meaning and value.

<sup>14</sup> David Hoy (1981, 173) and (1986, 24ff), for instance, argues that Nietzsche's language of "perspective" runs into a host of problems and paradoxes, and that it should be rejected in favor of the language of "interpretation." I, too, have argued in the previous chapter that, narrowly and literally construed, the language of "perspective" is problematic. However, I disagree with Hoy that Nietzsche's notion of "perspective" is to be taken in this literal sense and thus that the language of "perspective" is incompatible with the language of "interpretation." I am arguing here that Nietzsche construes the notion of "perspective" so broadly that it merges with the notion of "interpretation." Incidentally, elsewhere, in an explication of Gadamer's hermeneutics, Hoy makes a connection between perspective and interpretation that is quite similar to what I am arguing here per Nietzsche. He writes: "'Alles Verstehen ist Auslegung,' insists Gadamer repeatedly [...]; all understanding includes interpretation. This point follows from the necessary situatedness (*Situationsgebundenheit*) of understanding. Because an understanding is rooted in a situation, it represents a point of view, a perspective, on what it represents. There is no absolute, aperspectival standpoint [...] from which to see all possible perspectives" (1978, 51-2).

<sup>15</sup> The most succinct statement of this view, articulated from a standpoint between hermeneutics and Quinian analytic philosophy, is Rorty (1988b). Also see Heidegger (1927, esp. §§31-33), Gadamer (1965, esp. 345-366), Quine (1960, chap 2), (1969a), Davidson (1973), Goodman (1976), (1978), and Goodman and Elgin (1988). On the connection between hermeneutics and the Quinian strand of analytic philosophy, see Rorty (1979a, chaps. IV-VIII), Ramberg (1989, chaps. 9-10), Malpas (1992), and Hoy (1994, forthcoming).

Nietzsche goes on to argue that the world in which we find ourselves is a world of struggle, and that this struggle is a struggle between interpretations, each of which seeks to overwhelm [*überwältigen, überwinden*] the others by incorporating their terms into its own and articulating them according to its own system. This is how “interpretation” is characterized in an important passage from the *Genealogy of Morals*. Discussing the idea of punishment, Nietzsche pauses to “emphasize [a] major point of historical method”—to distinguish the *origin* of something from its current *purpose*. He writes:

[T]he cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends [*auf neue Ansichten ausgelegt*], taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a *subduing, becoming master* [*ein Überwältigen, Herrwerden*], and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation [*ein Neu-Interpretieren*], an adjustment through which any previous “meaning” and “purpose” are necessarily obscured or even obliterated. However well one has understood the utility of a physiological organ (or of a legal institution, a social custom, a political usage, a form in art or in a religious cult), this means nothing regarding its origin [...]. Purposes and utilities are only signs that a will to power has become master of something less powerful and imposed upon it the character of a function; and the entire history of a “thing,” an organ, a custom can in this way be a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations [*Interpretationen*] and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another but, on the contrary, in some cases succeed and alternate with one another in purely chance fashion. The “evolution” of a thing, a custom, an organ is thus by no means its *progressus* toward a goal, even less a logical *progressus* by the shortest route and with the smallest expenditure of force—but the succession of more or less profound, more or less mutually independent processes of subduing [*Überwältigungsprozessen*], plus the resistances they encounter, the attempts at transformation for the purpose of defense and reaction, and the results of successful counteractions. The form is fluid, but the “meaning” is even more so (GM II 12).<sup>16</sup>

What is particularly striking, in this passage, is that what Nietzsche calls “interpretation” extends far beyond, for instance, the explication of a literary text. He claims that “all events in the organic world” and, indeed, “whatever exists” essentially involve

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. GS 58, WP 556, 604, 643, 616.

interpretation. Furthermore, this involvement seems to concern not only their *apprehension by subjects* but their *very being as objects and events*. At the end of the section from which the above passage is cited, Nietzsche goes so far as to identify "interpretation" with "the essence of life, its *will to power*, [...] the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions [*die ... neu-ausgelegenden, neu-richtenden und gestaltenden Kräfte*]."<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche is arguing that "thinghood," "eventhood," "history," "development," and "evolution" are, at bottom, only manifestations of "will to power," the incessant drive for interpretation and reinterpretation, forming and re-forming; and that the very origin, history, and growth of "a 'thing'" (e.g., "a physiological organ, [...] a legal institution, a social custom, a political usage, a form in art or in a religious cult") should be seen as the consequence of its role in a struggle between interpretations, each of which is "aggressive" and "expansive," seeking to increase its power and control over its environment.

This same generalization and extension of meaning can also be found in Nietzsche's language of "perspective." Rather than functioning simply as an optical analogue, Nietzsche calls upon the term "perspective" to characterize something about life in general—"the perspective optics of life," he puts it in *Beyond Good and Evil* (11). Elsewhere in that text, he speaks of "perspective" as "the basic condition of all life" (Preface), and claims that "there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspective estimates and appearances" (34), and that "the narrowing of our perspective [... is] a condition of life and growth" (188).

We see, then, that Nietzsche's "perspective" language is quite peculiar and ought not to be taken at face value. Not only is the language of "perspective" subsumed under the broader language of "interpretation," but both "perspective" and "interpretation" are

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. BGE 259, WP 643.

generalized far beyond their senses in ordinary usage. "Perspective," for Nietzsche, comes to characterize the directedness of a particular form of life<sup>18</sup> toward the conditions that preserve and enhance it, conditions that are codified in the "interpretation" that directs the perspective.<sup>19</sup>

This can serve as a rough characterization of the notions of "perspective" and "interpretation" as Nietzsche uses them. Yet many questions still remain. Two sets of questions particularly present themselves and demand answers. On the one hand, one is led to ask about the *subject* of perspectives and interpretations: *who* or *what* it is that *has* perspectives and interpretations? On the other hand, one is led to ask about the *object* of perspectives and interpretations: what are these interpretations *of* or perspectives *on*? To begin to answer these questions, I want to briefly turn back to the neo-Kantian accounts of perspectivism. By focusing on the answers given by these accounts to our two guiding questions and revealing the problems with these answers, we might begin to formulate more satisfactory solutions and to fill out the schematic characterization of perspectivism presented above.

### 4.3 The "Subject" of Perspectivism

#### 4.3.1 Species as the Subjects of Perspectivism: The SNK View

*What* or *who* is it that has perspectives or interpretations? We have seen that, on the SNK view, the proper subjects of perspectives are biological species. This account

<sup>18</sup> This term is felicitous precisely because of its flexibility. It is loose enough to capture the entire range of systems of valuation that Nietzsche considers important (e.g., active and reactive, ascending and descending, weakness and strength, master and slave, Dionysian and Christian, etc.), while refusing to identify perspectives either with either the private points-of-view of individuals or the fixed physico-psychological schemas of biological species. I note that this Wittgensteinian term has circulated in previous discussions of Nietzsche's epistemology: see Strong (1975, 44, 79ff), Schacht (1983, 63), and Nehamas (1985, 52). The term has also been employed by Magnus in a discussion of Nietzsche's *Übermensch*(1986, 95).

<sup>19</sup> For a somewhat similar assessment, see Heidegger (1943, 71)

maintains that, through the process of evolutionary natural selection, each species develops a particular "physico-psychological organization" that mediates its view of the world and ensures that it apprehends and comprehends just enough of the world, and only in such a way, as to safeguard its survival and flourishing. While every member of the species can adopt different "perspectives" in a limited sense (e.g., by changing its position or entering into different circumstances), these nevertheless remain within the general "perspective" of the species as a whole, which it is not in any member's power to change.

It is certainly the case that Nietzsche's "perspective" language most frequently appears in contexts in which he is discussing the conditions necessary for particular species (especially humans) to preserve themselves and to enhance their power.<sup>20</sup> Yet, the interpretation of perspectivism generated by the SNK account commits Nietzsche to a position that, I have argued, he does not accept: the position that every species is in principle unable to apprehend both the world as it is in itself and the world as it is apprehended by other species.

The SNK view argues, for instance, that human beings inhabit only a single perspective defined by our species—"the human perspective." Yet important considerations reveal that Nietzsche does not believe there to be anything like a "human perspective," a unified and coherent totality rigorously differentiable from the "perspectives" of other species. First of all, Nietzsche's naturalism commits him to regard all living beings as, in fundamental respects, similar. He claims, for instance, that the human process of cognition is only a more complex and specialized form of the process of ingestion (or "incorporation") found in the protoplasm.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, a central theme of Nietzsche's later work is the notion that knowledge is only a form of will to power, the drive to incorporate and subdue found in all

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., BGE Preface, 11 34, 188; and WP 259, 293, 616, 678, 789, 904.

<sup>21</sup> See WP 500, 501, 510, 511, 654, 666.

organisms and species.<sup>22</sup> Not only do these considerations lead us to believe that Nietzsche is privy to knowledge concerning the “physico-psychological perspectives” of other species, they also lead us to believe that *human beings in general* are privy to such knowledge. Secondly, Nietzsche argues that the human species itself does not have a unified worldview, but rather is divided into a host of antagonistic “perspectives” or “interpretations”: e.g., master and slave, Dionysian and Christian, Homeric and Platonic, Roman and Judaic, and various hybrids of these.<sup>23</sup> Such differences of perspective, for Nietzsche, are not simply minor differences of opinion; on the contrary, they codify significant differences concerning modes of perception, desire, cognition, evaluation, and action.

It turns out, then, that, rather than demarcating insurmountable divisions between species, perspectives mark both extra- and intra-species differences and similarities. That is, according to Nietzsche, the biological field is crossed by a continuum of perspectives, none of which is in principle disjoint from another, but each of which can be shown to differ from others in important respects and to significant degrees.<sup>24</sup> The subject of perspectivism, then, must be something other than biological species.

#### 4.3.2 *Human Individuals as the Subjects of Perspectivism: The ASNK View*

<sup>22</sup> See BGE 13, 36, GM II 12, and WP 466-617.

<sup>23</sup> On master vs. slave, see BGE 260 and GM I. On Dionysian vs. Christian, see EH IV 9 and WP 1051 and 1052. On Homeric vs. Platonic, see GM III 25. On Roman vs. Judaic, see GM I 16. On the various hybrids of these, see GM I 16, BGE 260, and 200. In the oft-cited GM III 12, Nietzsche argues that we should learn to inhabit “a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge”—which certainly seems to argue against the view that we inhabit only some unified “human” perspective. Cf. Morgan (1941, 261): “Nietzsche holds not only that there are countless varieties of perspectives for countless forms of living process, but also that we human beings inhabit, not one, but a veritable nest of perspectives.”

<sup>24</sup> For a similar argument, see Nehamas (1983, 476-7).

The ASNK account of perspectivism explicitly rejects the skepticism encountered in the SNK view, and thus the notion that the subjects of perspectivism are biological species. Instead, it construes perspectivism as a doctrine limited to the description of human knowledge. Claiming that the doctrine simply draws an analogy between a common sense conception of human vision and a common sense conception of human knowing, the ASNK account argues that the subject of perspectivism is simply the ordinary, individual, human viewer and knower.

It begins from the obvious premises that "necessarily, we see an object from a particular perspective: e.g., from a certain angle, from a certain distance, under certain conditions," and that "the more perspectives we enjoy—the more angles we see the object from—the better our conception of what the object is actually like will be" (Leiter 1994, 344). It goes on to argue, by analogy, that "necessarily, we know an object from a particular perspective: i.e. from the standpoint of particular interests and needs," and that "the more perspectives we enjoy—the more interests we employ in knowing the object—the better our conception of what the object is like will be" (345). The argument concludes that, contrary to an over-zealous skepticism, "we do indeed have knowledge of the world, though it is never disinterested, never complete, and can always benefit from additional non-distorting [cognitive] perspectives" (346).<sup>25</sup>

This realist conception of perspectivism argues, then, that just as there is no visual perspective that is in principle unavailable to us, so too there is no knowledge that in principle escapes our grasp. Unlike the SNK account, this ASNK account has the benefit of acknowledging Nietzsche's claim that we have access to other perspectives. It suggests that, just as we can gain a new visual perspective on the object of vision by changing our position relative to it, so too can we gain different cognitive perspectives on the object of

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Clark (1990, 134-35).

knowledge by bringing different sets of cognitive interests to bear upon it. Moreover, insofar as it grants the interest-ladenness of all inquiry, it suggests that we might come to appreciate and acknowledge the legitimacy of perspectival interests other than our own, even if we ourselves do not share them.<sup>26</sup>

Yet this construal of the subject of perspectivism also runs into difficulties. Foremost among these, I want to argue, is its assumption of a pre-given subject who "has" perspectives or interpretations. According to the common sense account of vision called upon by the ASNK interpretation, when I move around an object, there is a change of perspective but no change of subject; i.e., it is the *same I* that takes up *different perspectives*. Perspectives are cumulative and thus, too, is knowledge. While I cannot simultaneously inhabit different perspectives, I can nonetheless consecutively take up a number of different perspectives on the same object and thus gain a richer visual sense of it. The situation is analogous in the cognitive case, according to the ASNK account. It argues that, although our knowledge is always "interested," we can bring a variety of "cognitive interests" to bear upon an object and thus come to know it better. Once again, across these different sets of "cognitive interests," there is a central, stable subject who consecutively occupies these different sets of interests and thus accumulates a more complete knowledge of the object on which these interests are brought to bear. "The more perspectives we enjoy—" Leiter writes, "e.g. the more interests we employ in knowing the object—the better our conception of what the object is like will be" (1994, 345).

This view does, of course, receive some support from the passage privileged by the ASNK interpretation. After all, in that passage, Nietzsche claims that:

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<sup>26</sup> Leiter says that "there are an infinity of interpretive interests that could be brought to bear" on the object of knowledge (1994, 345-46). Similarly, Clark writes: "We are, after all, finite creatures with a limited amount of time to discover truths, whereas there are surely an infinite number of truths to discover. We should therefore expect people with different interests to discover different truths" (1990, 135).

There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowing”; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about a thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe the thing, the *more* complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity,” be (GM III 12).

This certainly lends some credence to the notion of perspective accumulation proposed by the ASNK interpretation. Yet one of the major problems with the ASNK interpretation is that it focuses too narrowly on this passage and, more specifically, on the optical metaphor presented in the passage, to the neglect of other features of the passage and Nietzsche's other central concerns. As I have mentioned, it neglects to discuss the explicit connection between perspective and interpretation developed in this passage, a connection which, we have seen to be fundamental to an understanding of perspectivism.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore—and more important for the present discussion—it fails to take into account another central feature of Nietzsche's later work: his critique of the notion of a pre-given subject—what he calls “ego-substance” (TI III 5).

#### 4.3.3 Nietzsche's Critique of “Ego-Substance”

A critique of the notion of mental- or subject-substance is a basic feature of Nietzsche's later work. Though, like many of Nietzsche's major ideas, it is never developed at length, this critique appears in much the same form in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the *Genealogy of Morals*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *The Will to Power*.<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, Nietzsche's critique of ego-substance is a result of his naturalism, which is both anti-metaphysical (i.e., against the posit of any otherworldly entity and explanatory principle) and holistic (i.e., against every absolute foundation or origin). Thus, Nietzsche considers the belief that there is some “being” or subject-substratum “behind doing, effecting, becoming” (GM I

<sup>27</sup> Leiter notes that “Nietzsche uses the language of ‘interpretation’ freely throughout the material published during his lifetime [while] discussions of ‘perspectivism’ and ‘perspectives’ are far less frequent” (1994, 343). Strangely enough, however, Leiter goes on to discuss perspectivism with no reference whatsoever to the notion of interpretation.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., BGE 12, 16, 17, 19, 34, 54; GM I 13; TI III 5, VI 3; WP 229, 370, 477, 481-92, 531, 545-53, 631-2.

13) simply a theological belief. To posit such a thing is to posit an otherworldly entity that initiates or affects the happenings, effects, and appearances that constitute the natural world, while at the same time remaining outside that world, unchanged by its contingencies and exigencies.<sup>29</sup> The notion of ego-substance is also a form of the "myth of the given," what Nietzsche calls the myth of "immediate certainties," those simple, atomic, unities that are supposed to lie at the absolute foundation of all being and knowing.<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche's naturalism rejects the idea that there is any entity that is not essentially dependent upon other entities for its genesis and continued existence, and the idea that there is any fundamental, obvious fact that need not justify itself by relation to other "facts." For, according to Nietzsche, there are "facts" only against the background of a particular interpretation, and the only entities that exist are natural, i.e., essentially relational and contingent, entities.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in rejecting the foundational presuppositions of "materialistic atomism," Nietzsche also rejects what he calls "*soul atomism* [...], the belief which regards the soul as something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an *atomon*" (BGE 12). Such an idea, according to Nietzsche, is not only super-natural, but also fails to satisfactorily account for important features of human psychology, which reveals the human subject to be an amalgamation of competing impulses and drives, rather than an atomic unity.

As Nietzsche himself acknowledges, this critique of mental substance stems from the critique of that notion articulated by Hume and Kant.<sup>32</sup> Following Hume, Kant argued

<sup>29</sup> See TI III 5, VI 3; WP 487.

<sup>30</sup> See BGE 16, 17, 19, 34. Other "immediate certainties" repudiated by Nietzsche are God, the thing in itself, substance, and cause.

<sup>31</sup> See WP 481, BGE 34, and GM I 13.

<sup>32</sup> On Kant, see BGE 54; Hume is certainly the precursor to Nietzsche's critique of metaphysical conceptions of causality and the self, a fact that Nietzsche seems to briefly acknowledge in *Will to Power* §550. For more comparison between Hume's and Nietzsche's critiques of the self, see Davey (1987a). For a comparison between Nietzsche's and Kant's critiques of the self, see Schacht (1983, 138-40).

that, since the subject or self was not discoverable among the contents of experience, some other justification must be sought for its postulation. In *Beyond Good and Evil* §54, Nietzsche concurs with this line of thought. For Nietzsche, as for Kant and Hume, we only ever experience discrete impressions, actions, and effects, never the "subject" that is supposed to have those impressions or initiate those actions and effects.<sup>33</sup> But whereas Kant came to regard the notion of the self as a formal requirement of reason and to posit the anti-naturalistic notions of noumenal self and noumenal causality, Nietzsche comes to regard the self as merely a grammatical habit that supports a pernicious moral fiction. For the radical empiricist Nietzsche—who maintained neither Kant's distinctions between intuition, understanding, and reason, nor his conviction that practical reason must be taken for granted and its postulates justified—we are only justified in believing in actions, effects, doings, becomings, and appearances. It is only a "seduction of language," Nietzsche argues, that leads us to posit a "'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything" (GM I 13).<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, this linguistic habit serves the moral purpose of making some isolable thing, i.e. a specific subject, *responsible* and *accountable* for these actions and deeds. The separation of doer and deed, the subsequent removal of this doer from the conditioned and contingent world of effects and happenings, and, finally, the ascription of a "free will" to this subject, Nietzsche argues, serve to isolate some being as responsible for every eventuality, and to claim that this being was free to do otherwise.<sup>35</sup>

Of course Nietzsche also criticizes determinism, the notion of an "unfree will" (BGE 21). Yet my purpose, here, is not to delve into a lengthy discussion of Nietzsche's

<sup>33</sup> For Kant on the phenomenality of "inner sense," see (1871/77, B 67-9, 152-9); for Nietzsche on the "phenomenality of the inner world," see WP 477, 479.

<sup>34</sup> For more on our metaphysical seduction by the subject-predicate form, see BGE 16, 17, 19, 34, 54; TI III 5; WP 482, 484.

<sup>35</sup> See BGE 21, 219; GM I 13; TI III 5, V 6, VI 3, 7-8.

philosophy of mind or moral theory. I simply want to indicate that a critique of the notion of a pre-given subject-substratum is basic to Nietzsche's naturalism. The point is that, for Nietzsche, the assumption of such a "free will" behind every action seeks the source of the contingent and the conditional in something given and unconditioned, in short, something unworldly. According to Nietzsche, this scenario "deprives becoming of its innocence"—and it is the primary goal of Nietzsche's naturalism to restore the "innocence of becoming."<sup>36</sup>

#### 4.3.4 Nietzsche's Conception of Subjectivity: "The Subject as Multiplicity"<sup>37</sup>

This does not mean, however, that we should alter the subject-predicate structure of our grammar or that we should altogether do away with the notion of "subject" (or "soul" or "ego" or "will").<sup>38</sup> "Between ourselves," Nietzsche writes,

it is not at all necessary to get rid of "the soul" [...] and thus to renounce one of the most ancient and venerable hypotheses—as happens frequently to many clumsy naturalists who can hardly touch on "the soul" without immediately losing it. But the way is open for new versions and refinements of the soul-hypothesis; and such conceptions as "mortal soul," "soul as subjective multiplicity," and "soul as social structure of the drives and affects," want henceforth to have citizens' rights in science (BGE 12).

Thus, Nietzsche's rejection of the notion of subject as unmoved mover, *causa sui, causa prima*, or soul atom does not lead him to reject the subject altogether, but rather to construct

<sup>36</sup> See TI VI 7-8. Nietzsche's relatively few, and always enigmatic, comments concerning free will and determinism might, I think, be further elaborated through a comparison with Heidegger's much more substantial discussion of Being-in-the-world as a rejection of the Cartesian "worldless subject." See Heidegger (1927) and the discussion of these issues by Guignon (1983, 85) and Dreyfus (1990).

<sup>37</sup> This discussion has benefitted from several excellent analyses of Nietzsche's theory of the self: Strong (1985), Nehamas (1985, chap. 6), and Davey (1987a) and (1987b).

<sup>38</sup> These terms are used more or less interchangeably by Nietzsche. He alternately speaks of the soul-atom (BGE 12), the subject-atom (GM I 13, WP 488, 636), and the ego-atom (BGE 17, WP 635), "the soul as subjective multiplicity" (BGE 12) and "the subject as multiplicity" (WP 490; cf. WP 492). In various passages, he identifies "soul" and "subject" (WP 485), the "I" and "the will" (BGE 19), "doer," "will," and "ego" (TI III 5), "subject," "ego," and "doer" (WP 488). It should be noted that what is often translated as "the ego" is, in German, simply "*das Ich*," "the I."

an alternative theory of subjectivity. Following a recurrent strategy, he begins by reversing our common linguistic and philosophical conceptions, arguing that what is primary are actions, deeds, accidents, and becomings, rather than subjects, doers, substances, or beings. A naturalistic theory, Nietzsche contends, must start from these former and construct the latter out of them, rather than vice versa. Hence, just as Nietzsche comes to conceive of "a thing" as "the sum of its effects" (WP 551), so, too, does he come to conceive of the subject as the sum of its actions and passions.

Nietzsche's initial premise is that the natural world in which we are situated and that we observe is, first and foremost, a world of becoming, i.e., a world of myriad actions, happenings, effects, and appearances. Yet we can and do individuate this becoming into particular sets or groupings. The subject, Nietzsche argues, is just such a grouping. Subjectivity in general is characterized by a specific set of activities and appearances; and each particular subject is individuated by a peculiar subset of those activities, by a disposition to act in a particular manner and direction: "'the subject' is [...] a created entity [...] a capacity [...]—fundamentally, action collectively considered with respect to all anticipated actions (action and the probability of similar actions)" (WP 556).<sup>39</sup>

Yet, for Nietzsche, this unity is only a *relative* unity. The unity of the subject is the unity of a *disposition*, merely a probability that groups together a range of more or less similar and more or less connected activities for the purpose of simplification and calculation.<sup>40</sup> Subjects, Nietzsche tells us, are irreducible multiplicities.<sup>41</sup> The disposition that composes them is itself made up of micro-dispositions—what Nietzsche variously calls

<sup>39</sup> Cf. WP 485.

<sup>40</sup> See WP 561: "All unity is unity *only* as *organization and co-operation*: no differently than a human community is a unity—as opposed to an atomistic anarchy; it is a *pattern of domination* that *signifies* a unity but *is not a unity*."

<sup>41</sup> See BGE 12, 19, WP 488-92, 636, 660. This Nietzschean conception of subjectivity has more recently been advocated by Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault. See Foucault and Deleuze (1972, 206) and Foucault (1977b, 208).

"drives" (*Trieben*), "desires" (*Begierden*), "instincts" (*Instinkte*), "powers" (*Mächte*), "forces" (*Kräfte*), "impulses" (*Reize, Impulse*), "passions" (*Leidenschaften*), "feelings" (*Gefühlen*), "affects" (*Affekte*), pathos (*Pathos*), etc. Starting from the assumption that there are, first and foremost, actions, becomings, and appearances, Nietzsche posits "affects"<sup>42</sup> as the interior states required in order to explain and predict these actions, becomings, and appearances.<sup>43</sup>

These affects are as close as one comes to a "bottom floor" in Nietzsche's multi-levelled theory of subjectivity. With this hypothesis, Nietzsche would seem to be arguing that the subject is not an atomic, pre-given unity simply because it can itself be further broken down into component parts. But, with this, Nietzsche would seem to be replacing one sort of "subject atomism" with another, taking considerable force away from his critique of "ego-substance."<sup>44</sup> Indeed, in *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche seems to say that the "subjects" of interpretations and perspectives are affects:

[M]oral evaluation is an *interpretation*, a way of interpreting. The interpretation itself is a *symptom* of certain physiological conditions, likewise of a certain spiritual level of ruling judgments: *Who interprets?*— Our affects (WP 254).<sup>45</sup>

It is our needs that *interpret the world*: our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm (WP 481).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> I will use "affect" as a general term to encompass the host of other associated terms, since "affect" seems to combine the active senses of "drive" and "desire" with the more passive senses of "passion" and "feeling." Heidegger (1936-7, 44-53) attempts to distinguish these terms from one another, though he grants that Nietzsche himself often equates them and gives no real clues to help us sort out their different senses.

<sup>43</sup> See BGE 36, WP 619, 635. Note that, in WP 619, the translation should read "an inner world [not: will] must be ascribed to it."

<sup>44</sup> This charge is made by Davey (1987a, 23, 26). Deleuze (1962, chap. 2), too, seems to read Nietzsche this way, as positing two basic and irreducible forces: active and reactive.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. D 119, BGE 187.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. WP 567.

Here, Nietzsche all but identifies affect with interpretation. He argues that every affect is or has a particular "For and Against"<sup>47</sup> that makes it a kind of instinctive interpretation, a particular manner of construing and responding to its environing conditions. On the basis of these texts, one might reasonably argue that there is a simple answer to the question "who or what is the subject of interpretations and perspectives?" and that this answer is simply: "our affects."<sup>48</sup>

Yet, while affects are in some sense primitive, for Nietzsche, he refuses to conceive of them as entities, much less as atomic, singular, and unified entities that could be the proper bearers of perspectives and interpretations. First of all, on a micro-level, affects are the organic form taken by the basic "force-points" posited by Boscovich to replace the materialistic atom.<sup>49</sup> According to Boscovich, these basic items are "not [...] particles of matter in which powers somehow inhere"<sup>50</sup> but dynamic, differential "centers" within a force-field.<sup>51</sup> They are, as it were, temporary dams or accumulations of force, rather than subsisting entities. Second, on a more macro-level, affects are tendencies and processes ("becomings") rather than definite entities ("beings").<sup>52</sup> "Exuberance," "*ressentiment*," and "the feeling of power," for instance, are not exactly "things," but rather what Nietzsche calls "dynamic quanta of force or drive" that have their specific expression and direction. Third, affects are, by definition, relational: they relate one state of affairs to another. As the notions of "drive" or "impulse" suggest, affects are a pulling or pushing of

<sup>47</sup> Cf. BGE 284.

<sup>48</sup> Sarah Kofman (1972, 93ff, 135ff) takes Nietzsche to be claiming this.

<sup>49</sup> See BGE 12, 36. On Boscovich and Nietzsche's relationship to Boscovich, see Kaufmann's note to BGE 12, Stack (1981) and (1983), Crawford (1988, 87-9, 298-9), and Moles (1990, chap. 5).

<sup>50</sup> Gillispie (1960, 455), quoted in Kaufmann's note to BGE 12.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Deleuze: "Every force is thus essentially related to another force. The being of force is plural, it would be absolutely absurd to think of force in the singular" (1962, 6). This notion of being as an irreducible plurality is at the heart of Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche.

<sup>52</sup> See WP 556: "One may not ask: '*who* then interprets?' for the interpretation itself, as a form of will to power, has existence (but not as a 'being,' but rather as a *process*, a *becoming*) as an affect."

the organism in one direction or another. They are, as it were, the state between two states—what Nietzsche describes as “the state ‘towards which’ (*der Zustand, von dem weg*)” or “the state ‘away from which’ (*der Zustand, zu dem hin*)” (BGE 19). Finally, Nietzsche argues that it makes no sense to speak of an affect in isolation from other affects. We have seen that Nietzsche considers affects to be, in a rudimentary sense, interpretive. Like the interpretations described in *Genealogy III* 12, each affect is or has a “For and Against” [*Für und Wider*] “that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm” (WP 481). Yet, just as interpretations are always essentially engaged in a struggle with other interpretations, just as each interpretation always begins from and tends toward other interpretations that it re-interprets or is re-interpreted by, so, too, each affect is always engaged in a struggle with other affects, each of which “would like to compel the other[s] to accept [it] as a norm.” Affects, Nietzsche tells us, are “dynamic quanta in a relation of tension to all other dynamic quanta: *their essence lies in their relation to all other quanta*, in their ‘effect’ upon the same” (WP 635, my italics).<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the world is a “becoming,” for Nietzsche, precisely because it is essentially composed of these volatile relations. “My idea,” Nietzsche writes (speaking here of “bodies,” though the same holds for affects and interpretations),

is that every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force (— its will to power;) and to thrust back all that resists its extension. But it continually encounters similar efforts on the part of other bodies and ends by coming to an arrangement (“union”) with those of them that are sufficiently related to it: *thus they conspire together for power*. And the process goes on— (WP 636).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Once again, the language of “dynamic quanta” is the language of “affect” extended to encompass “all efficient force” (BGE 36). What holds for the more general language of “dynamic quanta,” therefore, also holds for the subcategory of “affect.”

<sup>54</sup> Cf. GS 333, where Nietzsche describes knowledge and understanding as a contract that temporarily settles accounts between struggling drives and relates them to one another in a non-antagonistic way. Cf. also WP 567.

Instead of individual affects, each with its own interpretation or perspective, then, what we encounter are always “unions” of affects. This description comes closer to capturing Nietzsche’s idea of “perspective” or “interpretation.” While each affect is or has an interpretation in a rudimentary sense, Nietzsche generally tends to consider interpretations and perspectives to be hierarchical aggregates of affects in which some dominate and others are subordinate.<sup>55</sup> Instead of being the proper subjects of interpretations and perspectives, then, affects turn out to be “subjects” only in a political sense: namely, members of the hierarchical structure of an interpretation.<sup>56</sup>

This description recalls our earlier characterization of interpretations as systems of evaluation directed by particular needs. But what is it that unifies a particular system and what makes a particular set of needs dominant? Nietzsche tells us that every interpretation and perspective is oriented toward the preservation and enhancement of a specific level of organization in life, from the individual to the group, the species, or life as a whole: “Insight: all estimation of value involves a certain perspective: that of the *maintenance* of the individual, a community, a race, a state, a church, a faith, a culture” (WP 259). Are the “subjects” of perspectivism, then, perhaps just these particular levels of life? In a sense, the answer is yes; for a particular perspective does represent the “point of view” of a particular culture, or race, or state, etc. Yet, once again, these perspectives are never encountered in isolation. First, we never come across these perspectives independently of the individual human beings to whom they are attributed. Second, each individual cuts

<sup>55</sup> This view of interpretation has recently been suggested by Schrift (1990, chap. 6) and Fowler (1990 and 1991). Fowler writes: “As I see it, a Nietzschean perspective can be correctly characterized as being a certain configuration of affects—or perhaps better, a certain ‘commonwealth of affects’ [...] which are related in such a way that some of these affects are dominant and so responsible for imposing order on what would otherwise be a chaos of motives and emotions [...] A perspective is just a structure of affects governed by a basic dominant affect (or small cluster of them)” (1991, 115-16).

<sup>56</sup> For a similar interpretation, in terms of the will to power, see Müller-Lauter (1974, §3 in the English, §6 in the German).

across all the various levels of life: i.e., human beings are individuals as well as members of communities, cultures, subcultures, races, classes, genders, nationalities, religions, political parties, etc. Thus, on the one hand, we always encounter perspectives within individual subjects, while, on the other hand, individual subjects are aggregates of these perspectives and their forms of life.

For Nietzsche, the individual subject is an aggregate on two levels—what are usually called “the physical” and “the spiritual,” “body” and “soul.” According to Nietzsche, however, these do not form the two sides of an opposition between different kinds of entity, but only a difference of degree along a continuum from the more or less unchangeable to the more or less changeable.<sup>57</sup> First, a subject has a *quantitative* identity insofar as it is born with a basic physical unity: an integral body. Yet even this basic unity and identity are only relative, since, according to Nietzsche, the body itself is “a political structure,” “an aristocracy” (WP 660),<sup>58</sup> that is, a hierarchy of organs, tissues, and cells, each of which has a particular role and function. In a healthy body, these various parts fulfill their functions in service of the whole; while in a sick or dying body, this relation of parts to whole (and thus the integrity of the body) is threatened or dissolving.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the relatively pre-given unity of the body is not an eternal verity but the product or result of “interpretation” (in Nietzsche’s broad sense of the word), that is, of millennia of evolutionary struggle and natural selection.

Second, and more important for the present discussion, a subject has a *qualitative* identity insofar as it is or has a more or less stable “character” or “self.” But this unity, too, is an aggregate, and, moreover, one that is intimately related to the physical, bodily

<sup>57</sup> Once again, I note that my discussion, here, owes much to Nehamas (1985, chap. 6) and Davey (1987a) and (1987b).

<sup>58</sup> In BGE 259, Nietzsche also notes that “the body” is an “aristocracy.”

<sup>59</sup> On this process of growth and decay, see WP 678. Also see GM II 12 and WP 643, on “physiological organs” as interpretive constructions.

aggregate. Indeed, Nietzsche argues that the organizational unity of the body provides the proper model for theorizing the “soul,” “self,” or “subject”<sup>60</sup>:

The body and physiology as the starting point: why?— We gain the correct idea of the nature of our subject-unity, namely as regents at the head of a communality (not as “souls” or “life forces”), also of the dependence of these regents upon the ruled and of an order of rank and division of labor as the conditions that make possible the whole and its parts. In the same way, how living unities continually arise and die and how the “subject” is not eternal; in the same way, that the struggle expresses itself in obeying and commanding, and that a fluctuating assessment of the limits of power is part of life. The relative ignorance in which the regent is kept concerning individual activities and even disturbances within the communality is among the conditions under which rule can be exercised. [...] The most important thing, however is: that we understand that the ruler and his subjects are of the *same kind*, all feeling, willing, and thinking (WP 492).

This last remark is important; for it suggests that the body not only presents the appropriate analogue for a conception of the self, but also that the latter is actually rooted in the former—in the affects, which are at once “physical” and “spiritual,” that is, interpretive.<sup>61</sup> The affects, then, are the point of contact between “body” and “soul.” In mirroring formulas, Nietzsche tells us that “the soul” is a “social structure of the drives and affects” (BGE 12), while the “body is but a social structure composed of many souls” (BGE 19). We could summarize this by saying that the self (the physical-spiritual “subject-unity”) is a composition of many “souls,” each of which has its own perspective, its own arrangement of drives and affects, Fors and Againsts. The self is thus an aggregate of many different perspectives and interpretations, each of which is affective, rooted in the various drives, impulses, desires, and passions of the body.<sup>62</sup>

This idea runs throughout Nietzsche’s discussions of subjectivity, selfhood, and character. In two notes from 1884, for instance, he writes:

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Wittgenstein’s claim: “The human body is the best picture of the human soul” (1953, 178).

<sup>61</sup> See BGE 19: “we are at the same time the commanding *and* the obeying parties”; and Z I 4: “‘Body am I, and soul’—thus speaks the child [...] But the awakened and knowing say: body am I entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body.”

<sup>62</sup> See GS Preface 2.

[D]ue to the *forgetting* that there are only perspectival estimations, all sorts of contradictory estimations and *therefore contradictory drives swarm* within *one man*. This is the *expression of the diseased condition in mankind*, in contrast to the animals, in which all existing instincts satisfy very specific tasks — this contradictory creature has however in its nature a great method of *knowledge*: he feels many Fors and Agains — he raises himself to justice — to a comprehension beyond the estimation of good and evil. The wisest man would be the *richest in contradictions*, who has feelers for all kinds of men: and, in the midst, his great moments of *grandiose harmony* — a rare occurrence even in us! — a sort of planetary movement — (WP 259)<sup>63</sup>

In contrast to the animals, man has cultivated an abundance of *contrary* drives and impulses within himself: thanks to this synthesis he is master of the earth. — Moralities are the expression of locally limited *orders of rank* in this multifarious world of drives: so that man should not perish through their *contradictions*. Thus a drive as master, its opposite weakened, refined, as the *impulse* that provides the stimulus for the activity of the chief drive. The highest man would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured. Indeed, where the plant "man" shows itself strongest, one finds driving instincts that powerfully conflict with one another [...], but are controlled (WP 966).<sup>64</sup>

Here, as elsewhere, Nietzsche argues that the human subject is a multiplicity. In contrast with animals, who are constituted of only a few, very specific, instinctive "perspectives," human beings are far more complex — collections of a vast array of competing instincts, affects, drives, desires, beliefs, and capacities, and thus of a vast array of perspectives and interpretations. Hence, human beings are at once very richly endowed and very fragile creatures.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Cf. GS 297 and KSA 11, 188: 26 [149]: "Justice, as the function of a broad panoramic power that looks beyond the narrow perspectives of good and evil and thus has a broader horizon of advantage — the intention to preserve something that is more than this or that person," cited in Heidegger (1939, 147), Krell's translation modified.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. BGE 284, WP 933, 881.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. WP 684: "The richest and most complex forms — for the expression 'higher type' means no more than this — perish more easily: only the lowest preserve an apparent indestructibility. [...] Among men, too, the higher types, the lucky strokes of evolution, perish most easily as fortunes change. They are exposed to every kind of decadence: they are extreme, and that almost means decadents. [...] This is not due to any special fatality or malevolence of nature, but simply to the concept 'higher type': the higher type represents an incomparably greater complexity — a greater sum of co-ordinated elements: so its disintegration is also incomparably more likely. The 'genius' is the sublimest machine there is — consequently the most fragile." Cf. also A 14: "relatively speaking, man is the most

Nietzsche contends that, for the most part, human beings have been unable to control the conflict of interpretations and perspectives that compose them. Pushed and pulled in multiple directions, the majority of human beings have shown themselves to be incontinent, unable *not* to respond to the myriad stimuli to which they are continually subjected.<sup>66</sup> As a defense against this wanton and painful condition, the majority has resorted to a drastic means of achieving order, control, and power: it has declared the entire range of affects evil and resolved to extirpate them.<sup>67</sup> Though it would appear to be a rather rare and extreme phenomenon, Nietzsche argues that this kind of evaluation is discernible not only in the activities of the religious ascetic but also in those of the philosopher (who distinguishes mind and body and sets the former above the latter), and the scholar-scientist (who strives for objectivity conceived as "contemplation without interest").<sup>68</sup> Indeed, "[a]part from the ascetic ideal," Nietzsche maintains, "man, the human *animal*, had no meaning so far" (GM III 28).<sup>69</sup>

But the ascetic solution, according to Nietzsche, is not only extreme, but self-defeating. For, in the guise of extirpating the affects and denying the multiplicity of perspectives, it simply elevates one affective perspective and rejects all the others. It, too, manifests a will to power and thus a privileged interpretation and dominant set of affects. Disgusted with sensuous existence, it plots revenge through the separation of mind and body, and the elevation of the "spiritual" and "anti-natural" over the bodily and natural. This situation is certainly paradoxical, for it sets a particular will of life against life itself,<sup>70</sup> an affect against

bungled of all the animals, the sickliest, and not one has strayed more dangerously from his instincts. But for all that, he is, of course, the most *interesting*."

<sup>66</sup> See TI V 2, A 30, WP 778.

<sup>67</sup> See BT "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," 1, TI V, WP 228, 383-88.

<sup>68</sup> On both of these, see GM III 12, 23-8.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche contends that this asceticism is such a pervasive feature that it can be said to characterize humanity as a whole; hence, Zarathustra's condemnation of "man" and call for the "overman."

<sup>70</sup> See TI V.

all affects,<sup>71</sup> "nature against something that is also nature" (WP 228); but it is nonetheless prevalent.

This strange phenomenon, Nietzsche argues, is "the *expression of the diseased condition in man*," a sign of nihilism, decadence, and the degeneration of life.<sup>72</sup> In this condition, human beings are primarily reactive and negative. They declare their contradictory nature evil and surmise that there must be a better condition—a good, non-contradictory, un-natural condition and world.<sup>73</sup> Thus, they come to exemplify that unnuanced, binary morality of *ressentiment*, which declares an other (in this case, the natural) evil and consequently infers that it itself (in this case the spiritual) must represent the good.<sup>74</sup>

However, the contradictory swarm of drives in human beings also presents another possibility. There are rare human beings, Nietzsche claims, in whom the many contrary drives, affects, perspectives, and interpretations are managed and organized into a rich and powerful unity. In such beings, all the affective perspectives and interpretations are allowed to express themselves, but in the service of the whole. Such human beings "give style" to their characters. Nietzsche explains:

To "give style" to one's character—a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a large part of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed—both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime [*Erhabene umgedeute*]. Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and exploited for distant views; it is meant to beckon toward the far and immeasurable. In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small. [...] It will be the strong and domineering

<sup>71</sup> See BGE 117.

<sup>72</sup> This theme runs throughout GM III, TI, and WP.

<sup>73</sup> See WP 579.

<sup>74</sup> See BGE 260 and GM I 10.

natures that enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under a law of their own [...] Conversely, it is the weak characters without power over themselves that *hate* the constraint of style (GS 290).<sup>75</sup>

Against the sensualist and relativist who submits indiscriminately to all drives and perspectives, and against the ascetic who attempts to annihilate the passions altogether, Nietzsche opposes the "highest person," who affirms that life is essentially affective, and that it essentially involves the will to power (the forming, shaping, organizing drive of all life). The "highest person" is one capable of incorporating the multiplicity of affective perspectives and employing them in the service of the whole. Thus, Nietzsche says, such a person raises herself to "knowledge," "justice," and "an estimation beyond good and evil."

Yet this entails a redescription of "knowledge" and "justice." "Knowledge" no longer means "objectivity [...] understood as 'contemplation without interest,'" for this is "a nonsensical absurdity" (GM III 12) that denies the affective character of all life and the affective perspectives and interpretations that are the very conditions for any knowledge whatsoever. Similarly, "justice" no longer means the equalization of power, the prevention of struggle, and the insurance of peace, for this represents "a principle *hostile to life*" (GM II 11), since it denies "the relations of supremacy under which the phenomenon of 'life' comes to be" (BGE 19).<sup>76</sup> Rather, for these "higher types," "knowledge" and "justice"

<sup>75</sup> One finds this same idea throughout Nietzsche's notes of the late 1880's. See, e.g., WP 46, 384, 778, 881, 928, 933, 962ff, 1014. Interestingly enough, this notion also appears in a much earlier text, where Nietzsche writes: "since we are the outcome of earlier generations, we are also the outcome of their aberrations, passions, and errors, and indeed of their crimes; it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as free of them, this does not alter the fact that we originate in them. The best we can do is confront our inherited and hereditary nature with our knowledge of it, and through new, stern, discipline combat our inborn heritage and implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature, so that our first nature withers away. It is an attempt to give oneself, as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate:—always a dangerous attempt [...] But here and there a victory is nonetheless achieved, and for the combatants [...] there is even a noteworthy consolation: that of knowing that this first nature was once a second nature and that every victorious second nature will become a first" (UM II 3).

<sup>76</sup> Granier (1966b, 199) seems to construe "knowledge" and "justice" in just these un-Nietzschean ways, that is, as attempts to see things as they are, to "be true" to a putative ontological ground: "the text of Being." Though he agrees with Sarah Kofman's critique of

mean an affirmation both of the multiplicity of affective perspectives or interpretations and of the organizing force that controls them in the service of the subject as a whole.

There is no better formulation of these aims than the famous passage on perspectivity in the *Genealogy*. For the "higher types," "knowledge" and "justice" are precisely "the ability to have one's For and Against *under control* and to engage and disengage them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge."<sup>77</sup> Such a nuanced, multi-faceted estimation is indeed something other than the binary, slavish morality of "good and evil." On the contrary, it points toward a different ethics: a model of practice firmly rooted in the *ethos*, one that extols self-control and fine discrimination in the estimation of the particular passions and actions appropriate for every given situation.<sup>78</sup> Perspectivism, then, is a doctrine that encapsulates Nietzsche's conception of practical wisdom, one that advocates the cultivation of a variety of affective centers within an overall organization (the subject) that is finely attuned to its environment, aware of the affective perspectives that are appropriate to a given circumstance, and able to skillfully deploy these perspectives as required.

#### 4.3.5 *The Subject as Interpretation*

Let me now make explicit the result of this discussion for the problem at hand, the problem of the "subject" of perspectivism. Contrary to the SNK account, we have seen that the subjects of perspectivism are not simply biological species; for, according to Nietzsche, there is no such thing as, for instance, "the human perspective," but rather, the

Granier's "ontologization" of Nietzsche (1990, 166-68), Schrift, too, comes to argue that perspectivism is motivated by a fidelity to the pluridimensionality of becoming (155, 188ff).

<sup>77</sup> Cf. BGE 284.

<sup>78</sup> This formulation invites comparison with Aristotle's ethics of *areté*. Solomon (1985) draws just such a comparison, arguing that Nietzsche's "affirmative ethics" are much closer to Aristotle's than to that of any other ethicist in the Western philosophical tradition. A similar comparison is made, with reservations, by Nehamas (1985, 193).

human subject is itself composed of a multiplicity of different perspectives formed at the micro-level of affects. Contrary to the ASNK account, we have seen that the subject of perspectivism cannot simply be the individual human knower presupposed as *atomic* and *given*; for Nietzsche maintains, rather, that the human subject is a *multiplicity* that is *achieved, accomplished, produced*. Moreover, the subject does not *have* these various perspectives and interpretations; rather, these perspectives and interpretations are what the subject *is*. That is, according to Nietzsche, the subject is nothing over and above the various affective perspectives and interpretations—the complexes of belief, desire, action, perception, and thought—that compose it, and the relationships between these perspectives and interpretations.

This is not mysterious provided that we take seriously Nietzsche's conception of the subject as a political organization. Every such organization is a more or less temporary union of different individuals and sub-groups who often have different experiences, views, and desires but agree (or are made to agree) about some central ideas, practices, and goals that supervene and serve to unify the membership. The force of the organization resides in the collective power of its members, in their ability to struggle in a particular direction and yet be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances by drawing upon the strengths of the individual members or sub-groups. There is no organization without these members, and no membership without the existence of the organization as a whole.

Nietzsche argues that the subject is just like this.<sup>79</sup> It is nothing over and above the sum and arrangement of the affective perspectives and interpretations that compose it. These are not, and need not be, homogeneous. Indeed, Nietzsche argues that the more

<sup>79</sup> Along the lines of Quine's "web of belief," Richard Rorty has described the subject in a similar fashion: as a self-reweaving web of beliefs and desires distinct from which there is no subject or "self" (1988, 93). Also, though a Nietzschean problematic is only implicit in their work, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have recently developed in detail this political model of subjectivity.

heterogeneous they are—provided that they maintain some allegiance to the whole—the richer and more flexible the whole will be.<sup>80</sup> This union, however, is “mortal”; it is a changeable entity. Different circumstances force the acquisition of new perspectives and/or the loss of old ones, thus altering the overall structure. And, if these changes are significant enough, or if particular factions cease to remain subordinate to the whole, the whole is threatened or falls apart. Nietzsche writes:

No subject “atoms.” The sphere of the subject constantly growing or decreasing, the center of the system constantly shifting; in cases where it cannot organize the appropriate mass, it breaks into two parts. On the other hand, it can transform a weaker subject into its functionary without destroying it, and to a certain degree form a new unity with it. No “substance,” rather something that in itself strives after greater strength, and that wants to “preserve” itself only indirectly (it wants to *surpass* itself)—(WP 488).<sup>81</sup>

We thus discover not only that the human subject is a fabricated entity, but that its fabrication takes the same form as the fabrication of an interpretation. Recall that, in his highly generalized account of interpretation (GM II 11), Nietzsche writes:

whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a becoming master, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adjustment through which any previous “meaning” and “purpose” are necessarily obscured or obliterated.

If “all events in the organic world” are submitted to this process, it is not surprising that this description also applies to the formation of subjectivity. Indeed, we find that Nietzsche not only conceives of the subject as *composed of* various affective interpretations and perspectives; he also conceives of the subject as *itself composing* an interpretation. The point is simply that, for Nietzsche, interpretation goes all the way up and all the way down. Rather than positing the subject as something removed from the realm of interpretation,

<sup>80</sup> This is a basic theme of Nietzsche's later work. See GS 295-97, 344, 373, 375; GM III 12; TI V 3, 6; WP 259, 410, 600, 655, 881, 933, 1051.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. GS 290.

something that stands behind and fabricates interpretations, we find that, for Nietzsche, the subject itself is fabricated by and as an interpretation.

Against positivism, which halts at phenomena—"There are only facts"—I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations [*Interpretationen*] We cannot establish any fact "in itself": perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing. "Everything is subjective," you say; but even this is *interpretation* [*Auslegung*]. The "subject" is nothing given [*nichts Gegebenes*], but something added, fabricated, and stuck behind [*etwas Hinzugefügtes, Dahinter-Gestecktes*].—Finally, is it necessary to posit an interpreter [*Interpreten*] behind the interpretation [*Interpretationen*]? Even this is fiction, hypothesis [*Dichtung, Hypothese*] (WP 481).

Why couldn't the world *that concerns us*—be a fiction? And if somebody asked, "but to a fiction there surely belongs an author?"—couldn't one answer simply: *why?* Doesn't this "belongs" perhaps belong to the fiction, too? Is it not permitted to be a bit ironical about the subject no less than the predicate and object? (BGE 34)

#### 4.4 The "Object" of Perspectivism

Nietzsche thus reverses our grammatical and philosophical conceptions of the primacy of the subject. At the beginning of the analysis above, we saw that, instead of first positing a given subject who then acts or is acted upon, Nietzsche argues that those actions and passions are what is primary and that the subject is constructed after the fact as a particular configuration of actions and passions. At the end of the analysis, we saw that this reversal extends to the notions of interpretation and perspective: instead of first positing a given subject who then acquires various perspectives and interpretations, Nietzsche argues that interpretation is primary, and that the subject is itself an effect of interpretation.

This view significantly alters the conceptions of subjectivity and interpretation presupposed on both the SNK and the ASNK accounts of perspectivism. It inveighs against the view that the subjects of perspectivism are biological species that have evolutionarily acquired a fixed interpretation or perspective, since, for Nietzsche, the process of interpretation resists this fixity and, instead, involves the constant acquisition

and/or forfeiture of new perspectives and interpretations which "are of the *same kind*, all feeling, willing, and thinking" (WP 492). It also inveighs against the view that the subjects of perspectivism are ordinary human knowers conceived of as pre-given entities that then acquire new perspectives and interpretations, since, for Nietzsche, "the subject is nothing given, but something added, fabricated, and stuck behind" (WP 481). In short, for Nietzsche, the subject is *a piece of* the incessantly transformative process of interpretation, rather than something other than, outside of, and prior to interpretation.

But Nietzsche's conception of interpretation no less alters our everyday and philosophical views about *objecthood*. On my reading, Nietzsche's theory of interpretation holds that the object is nothing given, but that it, too, is only ever the construction of one or another interpretation. This reading, however, is far from orthodox. While it is often granted that Nietzsche rejects *some* form of the given, few commentators have come to ascribe to Nietzsche the radical and thoroughgoing holism that, I argue, is warranted.<sup>82</sup> The SNK and ASNK accounts of perspectivism, for instance, read Nietzsche quite differently. Before offering my own interpretation of Nietzsche's perspectival theory of objecthood, then, I want to return to the SNK and ASNK accounts in order to determine both where they are supported by Nietzsche's texts and where those texts render them problematic and thus demand another interpretation.

#### 4.4.1 *Becoming and the Chaos of Sensations: The SNK Interpretation*

In order for there to be perspectives or interpretations, there presumably must be some *object* upon which there are perspectives, or some *primary text* upon which the various interpretations are based. That is, *prima facie*, the notions of perspective and interpretation seem to rely upon there being something *given* to perspectives or interpretations. Since

<sup>82</sup> The exceptions, perhaps, are Schacht (1983, 140-56) and Nehamas (1983) and (1985). See also Solomon (1983, 328n).

Kant, philosophers have come to identify two forms or levels of "the given": one can regard "the given" ontologically as the objects or world "out there" that we come to know (Kant's "thing in itself" or "noumenal world"); or one can regard it epistemologically as the immediate contents of perceptual awareness, the "sense data" that provide the raw material for conceptual understanding (Kant's "sensuous intuition"). While one may not be able to precisely isolate these "given" elements in experience, it is often maintained that they are nonetheless necessary in order to avoid what Kant called "empirical idealism," which holds that there is no ontologically distinct world to serve as the object, source, and goal of our knowledge.

According to the SNK account, Nietzsche's perspectivism also relies upon these "given" elements in experience. It argues that, while he rejects Kant's notion of the thing in itself as falsely ascribing the intra-phenomenal predicates of unity and individuation to an extra-phenomenal world, Nietzsche nonetheless posits a chaotic, undifferentiated "given" that provides the material for conceptual knowledge.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the SNK account holds that Nietzsche construes this "given" in precisely Kant's two-fold sense: thus, for Nietzsche, what is "given" to knowledge is either the "world of becoming" or the "chaos of sense impressions."<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup> See 3.1 and 3.2, above, and the references given there.

<sup>84</sup> Thus, on the one hand, the SNK accounts construe this "given" ontologically as: "the world of 'shifting,' 'evanescent' becoming" (Vaihinger 1911, 84), "sheer, undifferentiated flux," "swirling complexity," "a blind, empty, structureless, thereness," "a primal undifferentiated *Ur-Eine*" (Danto 1965, 89, 96, 97), "the chaotic being of a groundless depth" (Granier 1971, 139), "a chaotic becoming," "the everchanging stream of becoming which is the world" (Grimm 1978, 30, 32), the "unintelligible flux of becoming," "the radical flux of becoming" (Magnus 1978, 25, 169), "becoming in itself," "an evanescent stream of becoming" (Stack 1980, 54; 1981b, 80), "a self-contradictory world of becoming and change" (Mittelman 1984, 5), "an a-cosmic, unimaginable, unknowable chaos of power-centers" (Babich 1990, 83). On the other hand, SNK accounts also construe this "given" epistemologically as "an archaic strata of sense" (Granier 1971, 137), "the 'flux' or 'continuum' of sensation," "the sensory manifold" (Wilcox 1974, 133, 149), "the formless, unformulable world of the chaos of sensations" (Babich 1990, 83, citing WP 569), "a presumed, chaotic 'manifold' of sensory impressions" (Stack 1991, 35).

Moreover, in these passages, Nietzsche often makes use of the Kantian distinctions between the knowable and the unknowable, form and matter, and the active and passive faculties. For Kant, knowledge is the result of an active imposition of the forms of sensibility and categories of the understanding upon the unknowable world in itself that is given to our sense receptivity. Similarly, it seems, Nietzsche often claims that knowledge is the result of the active imposition of form, by the understanding, upon the "chaos of sensations" or "the world of becoming," which, in itself, is unknowable.

The material of the senses adapted by the understanding, reduced to rough outlines, made similar, subsumed under related matters. Thus the fuzziness and chaos of sense-impressions are, as it were, *logicized* (WP 569).<sup>87</sup>

The character of the world of becoming as *unformulable*, as "false," as "self-contradictory." *Knowledge* and *becoming* exclude one another (WP 517).

A world of becoming could not, in the strict sense, be "comprehended" or "known"; only to the extent that the "comprehending" and "knowing" intellect encounters a coarse, already-created world, built out of nothing but appearances but become firm to the extent that this kind of appearance has preserved life—only to this extent is there anything like "knowledge," a measuring of earlier and later errors by one another (WP 520).

It thus seems that to know, for Nietzsche, is "to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require" (WP 515), "to impose upon becoming the character of being" (617).<sup>88</sup>

#### 4.4.2 *Becoming and the Chaos of Sensations: A Naturalistic Re-Interpretation*

<sup>87</sup> Cf. GS 354.

<sup>88</sup> It should be said that, in WP 515, Nietzsche actually claims that such schematization and imposition of form is *not* "knowledge." The passage runs: "Not 'to know' but to schematize—to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require ... the need, not to 'know,' but to subsume, to schematize, for the purpose of intelligibility and calculation—" Yet Nietzsche is not arguing that there is no such thing as knowledge. He is only arguing that there is no such thing as knowledge "in the strict sense" (WP 520), that is, knowledge conceived as a passive mirroring of the world. Against such a view, this passage and those that surround it are concerned to argue that there is knowledge only as the active imposition of form (see WP 517, 520).

It would appear, then, that Nietzsche conceives of the structure of knowledge in Kantian terms. Were this the case, Nietzsche would clearly violate his own rejection of the appearance/reality distinction and put into doubt his expressed commitment to the primacy of the this-worldly, for he would be seen to hold the view that the world we know—the world of our experience—is built upon another, unknowable, primary, and pre-given world of becoming.

Yet there is another, less dramatic, way to read these passages. On the reading I would like to propose, the above cited passages are entirely consistent with Nietzsche's naturalism and, in fact, argue against the epistemological and metaphysical claims of Kantianism. These passages can be read as simply continuing the argument against the "prejudices" and "idiosyncrasies" of the metaphysicians, namely: "their lack of historical sense, their hatred of the very idea of becoming, their Egypticism" (TI III 1ff), their habit of "confusing the last and the first" (TI III 4ff), their "faith in opposite values" (BGE 2),<sup>89</sup> their belief in the "fictions" of "'pure reason,' 'absolute *Geistigkeit*,'<sup>90</sup> 'knowledge in itself,'" and "a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless, knowing subject'" (GM III 12), and their "faith in immediate certainties" (BGE 16, 34).<sup>91</sup>

First of all, one can read Nietzsche's comments concerning the primacy of becoming as empirical and phenomenological claims. As such, Nietzsche simply wants to direct our attention to the fact that the world in which we live—and of which we ourselves are inescapably a part—is continually undergoing change and transformation. Physical objects that the naked eye perceives to be stable and durable are, when viewed microscopically, shown to be a swarm of molecules, and, when viewed over larger time-spans, are shown

<sup>89</sup> Cf. HAH 1.

<sup>90</sup> I take this to be a reference to Hegel's notions of "Absolute Spirit" and "Absolute Knowing."

<sup>91</sup> Cf. WP 406-9.

to be undergoing various processes of expansion, contraction, reorganization, disintegration, decay, etc.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, though we always retrospectively construct ourselves as unified, consistent, and constant beings, we are, in fact, always enmeshed in physical processes of growth, procreation, degeneration, and death, and find ourselves to be an intellectual, psychological, and spiritual battleground of competing beliefs, desires, impulses, and needs.

Our perception, thought, and memory are carried along in this stream of lived experience. We have this perception or thought, then that. And we attempt to unify and systematize these perceptions, thoughts, and memories, yet some of them slip away, either through passive or active forgetting. We constantly measure the new against the old, and vice versa, each time coming to a temporary equilibrium before this stability is again disrupted by a new experience, a memory, or both. Never do we achieve absolute knowing, the ideal point of totalization or stasis when "all reports are in" and all of them are in perfect order. Nor does the world ever stop its incessant movement and alteration to allow us to summarize, calculate, and totalize it. Measured according to the ideal of an absolute knowledge that comprehends a fixed and stable world of being, our knowledge of the world and the world we know are "false." Thus, Nietzsche writes:

The world *that concerns us* is false, i.e., is no fact, but rather a fable and approximation on the basis of a meager sum of observations; it is "in flux," as something becoming [*etwas Werdendes*], as an ever-shifting falsehood that never nears the truth: for—there is no "truth" (WP 616).

This is not a lament. It expresses neither the nostalgia for a lost truth nor the hope for a truth to come. On the contrary, it is an affirmative renunciation of "truth" conceived of as the final comprehension of a world of being. Along with this renunciation, comes a

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<sup>92</sup> For an empirical construal of Nietzsche's language of "becoming," see Morgan (1941, 244, 268, 271, 281). Stack (1991, 42 and passim), (1992, 94 and passim) also makes this point, but then goes on to draw the unwarranted conclusion that this entails a sort of skepticism.

revaluation of the world we know and of our knowledge itself, an affirmation of the ever-changing and transforming world in which we exist as beings whose knowledge, too, is always relative to particular visual and cognitive horizons that are forever shifting.

Of course, Nietzsche realizes that we do not experience the world as a radical flux. But he argues that this is because we have biologically and socially inherited and constructed elaborate conceptual and linguistic edifices that serve to, at least partially, simplify and stabilize (or "logicize" or "falsify") the potential fluidity of our experience. Once again, we should not read this as some nostalgia for a lost world of becoming. In fact, Nietzsche is a great admirer of this tendency of humanity and of these edifices themselves, arguing that they represent the "genius of the species" (GS 354) and show humanity to be "a mighty genius of construction, who succeeds in piling up an infinitely complicated dome of concepts upon an unstable foundation, and, as it were, on running water" (OTL 85). "In this man is greatly to be admired," he writes, "but not on account of his drive for truth or for pure knowledge of things" (OTL 85). Nietzsche's contention that such structures are "false" is not a claim that something else—for instance, the world of becoming—is true. Here, as elsewhere, he makes polemical use of the terms "true" and "false," reversing the way in which they have been assigned within the old schema that he is attempting to dismantle. Contrary to the metaphysicians, he argues, such edifices do not grant us "the truth" conceived of as the total comprehension of a stable world of being. In this sense, then, they are "false." But that is because such "truth" is not forthcoming, and such "falsity"—such provisional and pragmatic horizons—is all we could ever have. Nietzsche's aim, here, is to show that, contrary to the metaphysical view, our conceptual and linguistic edifices ought not to be set over and against becoming, and do not provide us with a glimpse of another "true world." On the contrary, they themselves are *a part of*

becoming. That is, they are themselves instances of the construction and inhabitation of provisional, conditional, and contingent horizons that satisfy important needs and desires.

With this in mind, we can provide alternative renderings of the passages cited as evidence by the SNK account. *Will to Power* §517, then, might be re-read in the following manner:

The character of the world of becoming as *unformulable*, as "false," as "self-contradictory." [We can never stabilize and totalize from without a world that is in constant transition and of which we ourselves are a part.] Knowledge and becoming exclude one another. [Conceived as the totalizing comprehension of a world of being, knowledge will be confounded by the world of becoming in which we live.] Consequently, "knowledge" must be something else: there must first of all be a will to make knowable, a kind of becoming must itself create the *deception of beings*. [If we want to maintain some notion of knowledge, we must conceive it differently. Instead of setting it over and against "becoming," we should see it as itself "a kind of becoming," as a process within becoming—as an active interpretation rather than a passive mirroring, as the will of living beings to select from, simplify, and stabilize their world so as to insure their self-preservation and/or enhancement. Such a simplification and stabilization constitutes a "deception" insofar as it is not uniquely correct, for there are other purposes toward the satisfaction of which one might construe the world differently, and there is no construal that conjoins all possible purposes.]

We might also translate *Will to Power* §520 as follows:

A world of becoming could not, in the strict sense, be "comprehended" or "known" [Again, Nietzsche declares that knowledge, conceived as the full comprehension of things in themselves, is an impossible and superfluous ideal]; only to the extent that the "comprehending" and "knowing" intellect encounters a coarse, already-created world, built out of nothing but appearances but become firm to the extent that this kind of appearance has preserved life—only to this extent is there anything like "knowledge"; a measuring of earlier and later errors by one another. [What is given to knowledge is never "things as they are in themselves" but only previous appearances, previous interpretations, previous formulations of the world that are oriented toward some purpose or another. Knowing, then, becomes the weighing against one another of these interpretations, which, since they are not "facts," can polemically be called "errors."]

Finally, we might re-read *Will to Power* §569 as follows:

The antithesis of the phenomenal world is not "the true world," but the formless unformulable world of the chaos of sensations—another kind of phenomenal world, a kind "unknowable" for us [...] The question is whether there could not be many other ways of creating such an apparent

world. [What is excluded from the apparent world of our knowledge is not some "real, true, world in itself," but simply another apparent world, another arrangement of appearances. As Nietzsche writes in a note from the same period: "The 'real world,' however one has hitherto conceived it—it has always been the apparent world once again" (WP 566).<sup>93</sup> To put this another way, we might say that the world outside of our rational interpretation is not a fact or a given, but simply the world as fabricated by another interpretation. The latter might be "'unknowable' for us" in the sense that it does not conform to the rational structure of our ordinary experience (e.g., the indeterminate world of quantum mechanics or the world of the artist's manipulation<sup>94</sup>), but this does not rule out its actuality. In fact, Nietzsche wants to encourage such alternative constructions, especially aesthetic ones, and to insist that the more perspectives and interpretations we can construct, the richer our knowledge will be.<sup>95</sup>]

Thus, Nietzsche's apparent oppositions between becoming and being, the world as it is and the world as it is known, turn out to be no oppositions at all. The world of becoming turns out to be nothing other than the world in which we live, the world of our experience; and being and knowledge turn out to be not opposed to, but a part of, becoming. If Nietzsche seems, at times, to reverse the standard metaphysical oppositions, this is only a polemical strategy directed against metaphysical thinkers who are quick to separate becoming from being, appearance from reality, and to elevate the latter to the status of Reality and Truth. Nietzsche's polemics on the part of becoming, appearance, and error,

<sup>93</sup> Cf. TI III 6.

<sup>94</sup> Think, for instance, of the way in which the dream-like spatial and temporal manipulations that can be represented by film are "understandable," though such effects are "irrational" by comparison with our ordinary experience. This is precisely Nietzsche's point in "On Truth and Lies," where, against "the rational man of science," he sets "the intuitive man of art" for whom "anything is possible at each moment," "every tree can suddenly speak as a nymph, [...] a god in the shape of a bull can drag away maidens," "and all of nature swarms around man as if it were nothing but a masquerade of the gods," "as colorful, irregular, lacking in results and coherence, charming, and eternally new as the world of dreams" (89).

<sup>95</sup> See GM III 12; GS 373; WP 259, 410, 600. More recently, Nelson Goodman (1978) has argued that the world is capable of an immense variety of interpretations ("versions"); or rather, that there are as many "worlds" as there are "right versions" ("rightness," here, conceived as the result of a host of selective criteria: initial credibility, entrenchment, coherence, usefulness, edification, novelty, etc.). Goodman argues that there is no uniquely correct world-version, that new versions proceed from and reinterpret previous versions, that most versions are irreducible to, or conjoinable with, most others, and that the goal of "understanding" ought to be to generate and accumulate as many of these versions as possible.

then, are not skeptical polemics but sobering reminders of our contingency and conditionality, and affirmations of our creative power.

#### 4.4.3 Ordinary Objects and Human Finitude: The ASNK Interpretation

The ASNK account also acknowledges that the notion of perspectivity seems to require that there be some pre-given object on which there are perspectives. Yet it argues that this relationship between subject and object ought not to be construed skeptically, for this account maintains that Nietzsche rejects skepticism with the same stroke as he rejects the thing in itself. The object of perspectivism, then, cannot be some unknowable "becoming" or "chaos of sensations," but must be something readily available to our knowledge.

However, according to the ASNK account, Nietzsche also rejects idealism. This means that the object of perspectivism cannot itself be a representation, but must be something independent of our knowledge and its representations. This account thus comes to hold that the objects of perspectivism are simply the "ordinary," "common sense" things of our everyday experience.<sup>96</sup> Clark writes:

The perspectivist metaphor does invite us to think of a thing that is independent of the perspectives on it. If the same thing can be seen from different perspectives, its existence is not reducible to the existence of representations. It must be an extra-mentally existing thing, a thing with its own foothold in reality. Such a thing has *existence in itself*, as opposed to having only the kind of existence Berkeley or Schopenhauer would grant it: existence as a representation or appearance, *existence in relation to a mind*. However, this does not make it a thing-in-itself. The possession of extramental existence (*existence in itself*) is neither necessary nor sufficient for being a thing-in-itself. What is required is rather an *essence in itself*, an essence or nature that is independent of what it can appear to be. The affirmation of an independently existing thing (common sense realism) will seem to affirm a thing-in-itself (metaphysical realism) only if one conflates the thing/appearance and the reality/appearance distinctions. Given that conflation, it follows that a thing with extramental existence, that is, a thing that is independent of its appearances, must possess a reality that is independent of how it appears. [...] Without this conflation, we have no

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<sup>96</sup> See Clark (1990, 107, 121).

basis for assuming that an extramentally existing thing has a reality that is independent of how it can appear (i.e., that it is a thing-in-itself). Nietzsche's use of the metaphor of perspective helps us to see the conflation for what it is. It sets an independently existing thing over against the perspectives on it, but it does not thereby commit him to the existence of a thing-in-itself, for it equates the latter with something completely contradictory (what something looks like from nowhere) (1990, 136-37).

In a similar vein, Leiter writes that Nietzsche's perspectivism urges us to

give up [...] the metaphysical construal of the epistemic notions in our practice: e.g., the idea that truth might be glossed in a metaphysically realist sense, as that which is available from no perspective at all (i.e., independent of *all* human interests); or conversely, the vulgar idealist gloss that it is nothing other than what particular human interests take it to be. A metaphysical realism of this sort is rendered unintelligible because human interests are *conditions* of anything being true or knowable (whereas the metaphysical realist would have truth transcend *all* human interests). And a crude idealism is avoided because: interests are *only conditions* of our knowledge of objects; hence particular interests are not *constitutive* of objects. So just as it is a condition of seeing a thing that we see it from some perspective, so too it is a condition of knowing that we do so from the perspective of some interest (need, affect). Similarly, this epistemic interest—like the analogous visual perspective—determines what piece of the object of knowledge we pick out. But the object of knowledge is never constituted by that or *any other particular* interest. In that sense, it remains an independent object. Yet it is not—and this is the key point—a transcendent object, i.e. a thing-in-itself. For the thing-in-itself is the thing that would transcend *all* possible perspectives on it; but the thing—the object of knowledge—as conceived by Nietzsche would not be left over after all possible perspectives were taken. It would just be a *thing itself* (*not* in-itself) (1994, 350).

In short, the objects of perspectivism, according to the ASNK account, are simply the ordinary things that we are acquainted with in our everyday experience. Every such thing "is independent of its appearances," since it is not constituted by our perspectives; though it has no "*essence or nature* independent of what it can appear to be," since essence or nature is, presumably, attributed to it by our perspectives and interests. In other words, while it is a condition of our knowledge that we know the thing "from somewhere," this knowledge is not constitutive of the object, which has an existence of its own.

If we always know the object "from somewhere," there are an infinite number of such "somewheres," an infinite number of perspectives on the object. Hence, the force of the

"metaphor of perspective," according to the ASNK account, is that human knowledge is necessarily finite. Having identified perspectivism with the thesis that truth cannot outstrip our cognitive interests, Clark writes:

Our capacity for truth is limited [...] there are always more truths than any human being can know. We are, after all, finite creatures with a limited amount of time to discover truths, whereas there are surely an infinite number of truths to discover. We should therefore expect people with different interests to discover different truths (as well as many common ones). Our interests will determine where we look, and therefore what we see (1990, 135).<sup>97</sup>

Similarly, Leiter argues that one of the central claims of perspectivism is the "Infinity Claim," which stipulates that: "We will never exhaust all possible perspectives on the object of knowledge (there are an infinity of interpretive interests that can be brought to bear)" (1994, 345-46). He concludes that, for Nietzsche, "we do indeed have knowledge of the world, though it is never disinterested, never complete, and can always benefit from additional non-distorting perspectives" (346).<sup>98</sup>

#### *4.4.4 A Naturalistic Critique of the ASNK Interpretation*

Once again, the ASNK account duly attempts to respect Nietzsche's critique of ontological and epistemological dualism. Yet, once again, it does not succeed in this task. In the final analysis, it fails both on its own account and as a reading of Nietzsche.

Taken by themselves, the arguments presented by Clark and Leiter harbor a fatal contradiction. On the one hand, both commentators want to maintain that, though the object of perspectivism does have its own independent existence, it does not have an

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Alan Schrift: "Nietzsche puts forward the doctrine of perspectivism as an 'empirical' conclusion regarding human finitude: because human beings are situated bodily at a particular point in space, time, and history, their capacity for knowledge is inevitably limited. Being so situated, human beings are not capable of the 'objective,' 'disinterested' observation of 'reality' demanded by the traditional account of knowledge. Rather, there are only evaluations made from a particular perspective" (1990, 146).

<sup>98</sup> Cf. 350-1.

"essence," "nature," or "reality" of its own. Yet, on the other hand, both commentators are concerned to counter the claim "that reality holds no epistemic constraint on our interpretations of the world" (Leiter 1994, 347).<sup>99</sup> They want to say that the goal of knowledge is "to correspond to [the independently existing world], that is, get it 'the way it is'" (Clark 1990, 39), to "know about its actual nature" (Leiter 1994, 345). But one cannot have it both ways. If the independently existing thing or world has no "essence," "nature," or "reality" of its own, then it cannot constrain our various attributions to it of "essence" or "nature." If, however, it does so constrain our perspectival attributions, then it must have some "essence" or "nature" of its own—that is, it must be, in Clark's and Leiter's terms, a "thing-in-itself," making it objectionable on all accounts.

But the ASNK view also fails as a reading of Nietzsche. For the view that the objects of perspectivism are simply ordinary, independently existing things receives no support from his texts. On the contrary, Nietzsche's texts seem to vigorously argue against this view. In *The Gay Science*, he claims that only "erroneous articles of faith" cause us to hold "that there are enduring things; that there are equal things; that there are things" (110). And in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche speaks of "the lie of thinghood" (III 2), and argues that it is only "the metaphysics of language" and "the prejudice of reason"—a projection of the "faith in the ego-substance"—that "forces us to posit [...] thinghood" (III 5).<sup>100</sup>

Clark acknowledges that these passages seem to inveigh against her position. Yet she contends that they reject only "the metaphysical concept of a substance, the concept of an unchanging substrate that underlies all change" and not "the ordinary concept of a thing," "the common sense idea of an enduring thing or substance" (1990, 107, 121). The above-cited passages from Nietzsche clearly do reject the former, "metaphysical" conception of a

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Clark (1990, 39).

<sup>100</sup> Cf. TI VI 3.

thing. But Nietzsche does not make Clark's distinction between this "metaphysical" conception and an "ordinary" or "common sense" conception of thinghood. One can argue, as Clark does, that this lack of distinction is simply intellectual carelessness on Nietzsche's part. Yet I think it is something else, and that this points to a deep difference between Nietzsche's ontology and the ASNK account of it.

This difference becomes apparent once we consider Nietzsche's comments on the "lie of thinghood" within the larger framework of his theory of "interpretation," which we have seen to be so central and pervasive in his later work. In this light, we see that Nietzsche's perspectivism accepts neither the world of common sense realism nor the thesis that this world is infinite and our knowledge of it finite. On the contrary, we come to see that, for Nietzsche, there is no sense in speaking of "the world" outside of every interpretation, and that the plurality of such interpretations follows not from "the world" being too much, but from it being too little.

#### *4.4.5 Objecthood as Interpretive Construct: Nietzsche vs. Idealism and Realism*

Nietzsche conceives of the thing in itself in a twofold sense, both of which he rejects. On the one hand, he construes it in the Kantian sense: as a general posit naming that which gives content to our knowledge but which exists outside of the structure of this knowledge. In this sense, the thing in itself is distinguished from the thing as it appears to our knowledge.<sup>101</sup> Yet Nietzsche also thinks of the thing in itself more literally as akin to the Aristotelian conception of substance: as the pre-individuated, self-identical, unconditional, independently existing thing. In this sense, the thing in itself is distinguished from the conditional or relational thing.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See, e.g., GS 54; WP 553-54.

<sup>102</sup> See, e.g., WP 555-60.

This latter construal is not simply a misreading of Kant.<sup>103</sup> What Nietzsche is trying to do, here, is extend his critique of the distinction between the thing in itself and appearance to a critique of the distinctions between substance and attribute, the absolute and the relational, the unconditional and the conditional. All these former terms, he argues, name entities and notions that are perniciously unnaturalistic, metaphysical, and theological. Never in our everyday or scientific experience do we come across absolute and unconditional entities or things as they are in themselves. Everything we know to exist owes its genesis and continued existence to its dependence upon, and relations with, other things, forces, and events, past and present. Indeed, we are even in principle forbidden from encountering such absolute and unconditional things, since such an encounter would place them in a conditional relationship to us.<sup>104</sup> Thus, since things in themselves and absolute, unconditional things do not and cannot exist in our contingent, conditional, and relational world, they must exist in another world. But since this posit of the other-worldly arises within us, and since we are thoroughly contingent and conditional creatures with no extra-natural source of knowledge or insight, Nietzsche concludes that this posit expresses nothing but a perverse desire for self- and world-negation.

Nietzsche thus rejects these notions and attempts to formulate an ontological theory that does without them. Following his usual strategy, he begins with the naturalistic premise that all the evidence we have for our ontology is sensory evidence. But sensory evidence, Nietzsche acknowledges, reveals only so many appearances and effects, not the substantial

<sup>103</sup> This charge is levelled by Wilcox (1974, 120) and Houlgate (1993, 128).

<sup>104</sup> See WP 555: "One would like to know how *things in themselves* are obtained; but behold, there are no *things in themselves!* But even supposing there were an *in-itself*, an *unconditioned thing*, it would for that reason be *unknowable!* Something *unconditioned* cannot be known; otherwise it would *not* be *unconditioned!* Knowing is always but 'placing oneself-in-a-conditional-relation-to-something'—one who seeks to know the *unconditioned* desires that it should not concern him [...] This involves a contradiction [...]"

"things" or "causes" that are said to underlie these appearances and effects.<sup>105</sup> He thus proposes that "things" and "causes" simply designate particular assemblages of appearances, dispositions to particular manifestations.<sup>106</sup> It is this line of thought that leads Nietzsche to claim that a "'thing' is the sum of its effects, synthetically united by a concept, an image" (WP 551), that "objects" are only a "complexes of events apparently durable in comparison with other complexes" (WP 552), that "if I remove all the relationships, all the 'properties,' all the 'activities' of a thing, the thing does *not* remain over" (WP 558), and that "the 'thing' in which we believe was only *invented and added* as a foundation for the various attributes" (WP 561).<sup>107</sup>

<sup>105</sup> See, e.g., WP 551: "We have absolutely no experience of a cause [...] There is no such thing as a cause [...] In fact, we invent causes after the schema of the effect; the latter is known to us." And see, e.g., GS 54: "What is 'appearance' for me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance! Certainly not a dead mask that one could place on an unknown *x* or remove from it!"

<sup>106</sup> Nietzsche's view is, then, a particular kind of phenomenism, as he himself grants in GS 354 and WP 475, 477-79. Yet, unlike traditional phenomenism, Nietzsche's theory of knowledge does not rest upon the "givenness" of "sense data" (see 4.4.1-4.4.2, above), nor does it take the knowing subject as something "given" to which appearances appear. While he thus grants that all we have are appearances, and that these appearances depend upon the stimulation of our sense organs, Nietzsche also holds that appearances only ever present themselves as always already interpreted. His position is thus closer to that of W.V. Quine and Nelson Goodman, for whom physical objects are not "given" but are simply the "posita" (or, as Quine occasionally calls them, "myths") of physicalistic systems, which are superior to other systems only in relation to a particular set of objectives. See Quine (1948, 17ff) and (1951, 44-46) and Goodman (1960), (1976, 3-10), and (1978, 8, 117 and passim).

<sup>107</sup> Charles Guignon (1983) remarks that "this holistic conception of substance has a long and dignified history" and that it "holds a distinguished place in German philosophy, running through Spinoza, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Schelling, to Dilthey, Heidegger, and more recently Gadamer." Guignon neglects to mention Nietzsche; yet his description of this holistic ontology nicely captures Nietzsche's view. He writes: "On the holistic view of substance, the being of an entity is determined by the totality of its relations to other entities within a whole field or system. Hence, there is no way meaningfully to pick out or identify an entity without at least implicitly referring to the entire context in which it finds its place [...] One consequence of this emphasis on the context of the whole is that relations are raised to prominence while the relata are dissolved into the network of relations in which they stand. The priority of relations over individuals leads to a 'philosophy of internal relations' in which each concept serves to pick out a nexus in a field rather than an object. If all relations are internal, then changes in any term in the network will have repercussions across the whole [...] It seems that claiming that a relation is internal to an entity is always relativized to a particular description of that entity [...] If an entity's being is fully circumscribed by its place in a totality, then it is not clear that another entity could take its place without changing the meaning of the whole. As a result, the essence of an entity is inextricably bound up with

The notion that objects are particular complexes of "appearances" and "effects" calls for a specification of *that to which* they appear and *that which* they effect; for "appearances" and "effects" do not exist "in themselves" but only in relation to a particular standpoint. Nietzsche thus comes to hold that objects are what they are only under a particular description, for a particular perspective or interpretation. He writes:

That things possess a *constitution in themselves* entirely apart from interpretation and subjectivity, is a *totally idle hypothesis*: it presupposes that *interpretation and subjectivity* are *not* essential, that a thing freed from all relationships would still be a thing (WP 560).

The "what is that?" is an *establishment of meaning* from some other viewpoint. The "essence," the "being" [Wesenheit] is something perspectival that already presupposes a plurality [i.e., at least two items: the thing and that for-which the thing is a thing]. At bottom, there always lies "what is that for me?" (for us, for all that lives, etc.) [...] In short: the being [Wesen] of a thing is only an *opinion* about the "thing." Or rather: "*it is considered*" [»es gilt«] is the actual "*it is*," the only "*this is*" (WP 556).<sup>108</sup>

We should be careful to distinguish this position from any simple-minded relativism, subjectivism, or solipsism. Nietzsche is not making the claim that everything is subjective such that no one can ever know how the world appears to another. We have seen that the term "perspective," for Nietzsche, characterizes not the private point of view of an individual, but the particular interpretive horizon of a form of life, defined as an evaluative center situated anywhere from the micro-level of affects to the macro-level of cultural, social, and political organizations. The individual, then, is a configuration of these micro- and macro-perspectives, not an irreducible entity with a unique perspective of its own. We have also seen that Nietzsche conceives of these perspectives not as radically disjoint from one another, but as always engaged in a struggle that incessantly leads to the blurring of old boundaries between interpretations and to the construction of new hybrid interpretations.

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its actual locus in the totality. It cannot be picked out or identified independently of its position in that context" (47-8). Cf. WP 553-70.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. GS 58.

Finally, we have seen that, for Nietzsche, the “active and interpreting forces” that constitute a particular perspective are that “through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*” (GM III 12)—that interpretations determine what is to count as an object or thing.<sup>109</sup>

In Nietzsche’s usage, then, a perspective is not a private point of view, but a public system of evaluation that assembles, selects, organizes, and hierarchizes appearances deemed relevant to its particular purposes and projects. In this light, we can see that Nietzsche’s perspectival ontology has little in common with facile subjective relativism, but much more in common with the systematic and public “ontological relativity” more recently defended by philosophers such as W.V. Quine, Nelson Goodman, Catherine Elgin, Hilary Putnam, and Richard Rorty.<sup>109</sup> Generally speaking, the theory of “ontological relativity” holds: (i) that it makes no sense to give an absolute description of “what there is,” (ii) that it only makes sense to say “what there is” relative to a background theory with its own purposes and criteria of individuation, (iii) that there exist a host of such theories, many of which are equally warranted yet incompatible with one another, and thus, (iv) that there is no uniquely correct “way the world is” but rather as many “ways the world is” as there are warranted theories.

This view proceeds from the naturalistic premise that we never encounter “the world as it is in itself” but only ever “the world as it appears under a particular description.” Moreover, it argues that, since there is no comparing a “description” with “the world as it is

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<sup>109</sup> See Quine (1969a), Goodman (1960) and (1978), Goodman and Elgin (1988), Elgin (1989), and Putnam (1979), (1981, chap. 3). Rorty’s statements of agreement with this line of thinking are scattered throughout his writings. Of course, there are significant differences between these writers’ various formulations of the theory. Here, however, I am more interested in the general notion that ontology is relative to theory and that there is no uniquely correct theory, and therefore no unique ontology. For some of the differences between these theories, see Putnam (1986) and (1992). While these philosophers are generally more concerned with differences between various *scientific* systems (e.g. phenomenalistic vs. physicalistic systems, macro-physical vs. micro-physical systems), Goodman and Elgin make it clear that the theory is also applicable to those systems that are closest to Nietzsche’s concerns, e.g., the evaluative systems of art and morality. See Goodman (1976) and Goodman and Elgin (1988).

under no description at all," this latter notion is superfluous. All we can ever do is compare descriptions with other descriptions. And since there is no One-True-World, there is no description that could show itself to be the One-True-Description by "corresponding to" that World. Thus there are only descriptions and no single world of which they are all descriptions. Each *description*, then, is actually a *prescription* that constructs a world, leaving us with no World but with many world-versions.<sup>110</sup> In some cases these world-versions can be usefully reduced to or translated into one another (e.g. the world of Ptolemy into the world of Copernicus), or helpfully conjoined with one another (the world of Newton with the world of Einstein). But, in some cases, this reduction, translation, and conjunction is impossible or absurd (to use Goodman's example: "How do you go about reducing Constable's or James Joyce's world-view to physics?" (1978, 5); and, even if one could, would not quite a bit be lost?).<sup>111</sup> Thus, we inhabit many worlds at once, and "objectivity" comes to name a competence in the many ways of worldmaking and the skill of being able to appropriately shift from one to another.

All these theses are Nietzsche's as well. For Nietzsche, there are only descriptions, interpretations, or perspectives ...

<sup>110</sup> The notion that every valid description constructs a "world" or "world-version" was proposed by Nelson Goodman (1978). It has run into considerable controversy, even among those who are otherwise sympathetic to Goodman's general project. Critics argue that the notion that we simultaneously live in many worlds is metaphysical at worst and misleading at best (see Quine 1978; Scheffler 1980; Hempel 1980; Rorty 1982, xlvii). Yet Goodman makes clear his reasons for the formulation: since there is no World of which all descriptions are valid, and since descriptions delineate modes of composing, weighting, and ordering entities, qualities, and their relationships, we seem justified in saying that there are many "worlds" or "world-versions" provided that we conceive of these worlds as the specifiable, *actual* worlds of our practice and not the merely *possible* worlds of metaphysical speculation. See Goodman (1978) and (1984, chap. II).

<sup>111</sup> Nehamas elaborates on this aesthetic analogy: "There is no sense in which painters, even if we limit our examples to realistic depictions of one's visual field, can ever paint 'everything' that they see. What they 'leave out' is in itself quite indeterminate, and can be specified, if at all, only through other paintings, each of which will be similarly 'partial.' Analogously, Nietzsche believes, there can be no total or final theory or understanding of the world. On his artistic model, the understanding of everything would be like a painting that incorporates all styles or that is painted in no style at all—a true chimera, both impossible and monstrous" (1985, 50-51).

There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective "knowing" (GM III 12).

... and no One-True-World of which they are all descriptions:

The "apparent" world is the only one: the "true" world is merely *added by a lie* (TI III 2).

There is no "other," no "true," no essential being [...] The antithesis of the apparent world and the true world is reduced to the antithesis "world" and "nothing" (WP 567).

Each perspective fabricates a world:

The question "what is that?" is an *establishment of meaning* from some other viewpoint. The "essence," the "being" is something perspectival (WP 556).

The *perspective* therefore determines the character of the "appearance" (WP 567).

There are many different, coexisting perspectives:

No limit to the ways in which the world can be interpreted (WP 600).

The world [...] has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings (WP 481).

Thus there are many different, coexisting worlds; and The World is nothing other than the totality of these "apparent" worlds:

Every center of force adopts a *perspective* toward the entire *remainder*, i.e., its own particular *valuation*, mode of action, and mode of resistance. The "apparent world," therefore, is reduced to a specific mode of action on the world, emanating from a center. Now there is no other mode of action whatever; and the "world" is only a word for the totality of these actions (WP 567).

Yet this totality is not a neat synthesis but an assemblage of differences:

The world, apart from our condition of living in it [...] does *not* exist as a world "in-itself"; it is essentially a world of relationships; it has, under certain conditions, a *differing aspect* from every point; its being is essentially different from every point; it presses upon every point, every point resists it—and the sum of these is in every case quite *incongruent* (WP 568).

Finally, for Nietzsche, "objectivity" no longer means the attempt to see the world under no description at all, or the achievement of an absolute knowing that could synthesize all these perspectives and aspects, but rather the cultivation of a variety of perspectives and the ability to appropriately shift between them:

"Objectivity" [is] the ability to have one's For and Against *under control* and to engage and disengage them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge (GM III 12).

The wisest man would be the one richest in contradictions (WP 259).<sup>112</sup>

Not only does Nietzsche's perspectivism have nothing to do with solipsism or subjectivist relativism, it also has nothing to do with idealism, contrary to the suggestions of some of Nietzsche's commentators.<sup>113</sup> In the first place, Nietzsche short-circuits idealism by rejecting the notion that subjects or minds are primary or given.<sup>114</sup> He writes: "Everything is subjective," you say; but even this is *interpretation*. The 'subject' is nothing given, but something added, fabricated, and stuck behind" (WP 481). As we have seen, both "subjects" and "objects," for Nietzsche, are what they are only by virtue of their relationships, that is, by virtue of their actions, reactions, and the ways in which these relate to the actions and reactions of the entities they encounter. Rejecting the notions of the noumenal self and the self-as-substance, Nietzsche argues that we know ourselves only empirically<sup>115</sup> and that this self-apprehension and self-knowledge is a complex and

<sup>112</sup> Cf. BGE 12: "a philosopher—if today there could be philosophers—would be compelled to find the greatness of man, the concept of 'greatness,' precisely in his range and multiplicity, in his wholeness in manifoldness. He would even determine value and rank in accordance with how much and how many things one could bear and take upon himself, how far one could extend his responsibility."

<sup>113</sup> See Danto (1965, 131-32), Wilcox (1974, 121-22), and Davey (1987a, 21-21). On the notion that Goodman's view is an idealism, see Putnam (1992); against this view, see Rorty (1982, xxxix-xl) and Goodman (1978, x, 119).

<sup>114</sup> See 4.3, above and Strong (1985, 298).

<sup>115</sup> See GS 354: "It was only as a social animal that man acquired self-consciousness"; and cf. WP 524: "It is essential that one should not make a mistake over the role of 'consciousness': it is our *relation with the 'outer world'* that evolved it. [...] It is only a means of communication: it evolved through social intercourse and with a view to the interests

ongoing process of balancing the ways in which we appear to ourselves and the ways in which we are described and situated by others.<sup>116</sup> In short, then, for Nietzsche, "the subject," too, is a collection of appearances organized by an interpretation—the latter encompassing, rather than proceeding from, a conscious subject, and extending far beyond the realm of consciousness and subjectivity to include the instinctive and, perhaps, even the inorganic.

Nor does Nietzsche deny the reality of the external world or claim that we can make interpretations, worlds, subjects, and objects any way we please. He knows well that there are always constraints upon our world-making. He only refuses to grant that there is some pre-given world that can or should ultimately serve as that constraint. Rather, what reality there is and what constraints there are, Nietzsche argues, are provided solely by *the dominant, existing interpretations*.<sup>117</sup> We are born into and live among the worlds that have been fabricated by our forebears.<sup>118</sup> These worlds need not be accepted in full, but neither can they be rejected altogether or even in large part. For, having relinquished the notion that there exists a pre-given world, nothing can serve as a foil except *another interpretation*; and, in order to accomplish a compelling transformation, we must use old interpretations as a lever.<sup>119</sup> Transformation is effected only by slow and patient work,

of social intercourse ... 'Intercourse' here understood to include the influences of the outer world and the reactions they compel on our side; also our effect *upon* the outer world." For more on "the phenomenality of the inner world," see WP 475, 477-79, 504.

<sup>116</sup> For instance, Nietzsche's descriptions of both the man of *resentiment* and the man of nobility characterize self-consciousness as essentially bound up with social relations: in the former case, those between oneself and a foreign other, in the latter case, those between oneself and one's peers.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Goodman: "The many stuffs—matter, energy, waves, phenomena—that worlds are made of are made along with the worlds. But made from what? Not from nothing, after all, but from other worlds. Worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking" (1978, 6). This, I take it, is what Nietzsche by his claims that "'Will' [...] can affect only 'will'—and not 'matter'" (BGE 36).

<sup>118</sup> I.e., we cannot help but be "burdened with those estimates of things that have their origin in the passions and loves of former centuries" (GS 57).

<sup>119</sup> This is a theme common to many recent versions of radical anti-foundationalism and holism. It is, for instance, a central feature of Donald Davidson's essay, "On the Very Idea

which proceeds by appealing to at least some of the accepted criteria in the service of novel construction.<sup>120</sup> "We can destroy only as creators!" Nietzsche writes. "But let us not forget this either: it is enough to create new names and estimations and probabilities in order to create in the long run new 'things'" (GS 58).<sup>121</sup>

If Nietzsche's ontological theory is not an idealism, then, neither is it a realism, whether "metaphysical" or "common sense." For Nietzsche holds: (i) that we never encounter a pre-given world (whether of "becoming" or of "ordinary objects"), (ii) that the world we encounter is the world as constructed by one or another interpretation, and (iii) that all interpretation is reinterpretation. In short, for Nietzsche, there is no escaping the world of interpretation; and there is not even a "world" without interpretation. Several important

of a Conceptual Scheme," and of much of the early work of Jacques Derrida, who writes: "The already-there-ness of instruments and concepts cannot be undone or reinvented. In that sense the passage from desire to discourse loses itself in *bricolage*, it builds its castles with debris [...]. The most radical discourse, the most inventive and systematic engineer are surprised and circumvented by a history, a language, etc., a world (for 'world' means nothing else) from which they must borrow their tools, if only to destroy the former machine [...]. The idea of the engineer breaking with all *bricolage* is dependent on a creationist theology" (1967, 138-9). Cf. Derrida (1966, 280-81).

<sup>120</sup> It is not surprising, then, that Nietzsche's preferred manner of critique and construction is genealogical. Contrary to "history," which, according to Nietzsche, is imbued with a false notion that development or evolution is a continuous progress from origin to goal, "genealogy" sees the past as "a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another but, on the contrary, in some cases succeed and alternate with one another in a purely chance fashion," as "a succession of more or less profound, more or less mutually independent processes of subduing, plus the resistances they encounter" (GM II 12). Genealogical inquiry, then, investigates the past in order to reveal the contingency of the dominant interpretations and to discover resources with which to counter those interpretations. I note that this methodology, and the anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism that necessitate it, is largely imported into Heidegger's conception of the "destruktion" of the history of ontology and Derrida's conception of the "deconstruction" of metaphysics, both of which reject radical novelty and conceive of their tasks as involving both a de-construction and re-construction, that is, a desedimentation of past interpretations so as to open up possibilities that had thus far been foreclosed by the interpretive tradition. See Heidegger (1927, §6) and Derrida (1967, 10ff).

<sup>121</sup> Cf. UM II 3: "The best we can do is to confront our inherited and hereditary nature with our knowledge of it, and through a new, stern discipline combat our inborn heritage and implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct, a second nature, so that our first nature withers away. [...] But here and there a victory is nonetheless achieved, and for the combatants [...] there is even a noteworthy consolation: that of knowing that this first nature was once a second nature and that every victorious second nature will become a first." Here, Nietzsche is concerned with the "nature" of the subject, though the point applies to the "nature" of the object as well.

passages underscore these points. Nietzsche begins Book Two of *The Gay Science* with a section that foregrounds this "anti-realism." Addressing his remarks "*To the realists*," he writes:

You sober [*nüchternen*: also, empty] people who feel well armed against passion and fantasy and would like to turn your emptiness [*Leere*] into a matter of pride and an ornament: you call yourselves realists and hint that the world really is the way it appears to you. As if reality stood unveiled before you alone. [...] But in your unveiled state are not even you still very passionate and dark creatures [...] and still far too similar to an artist in love? [...] You are still burdened with those estimates of things that have their origin in the passions and loves of former centuries. Your sobriety still contains a secret and inextinguishable drunkenness. Your love of "reality," for example—oh that is a primeval "love." In every sensation and every sense impression there is a piece of this old love; and some fantasy, some prejudice, some unreason, some ignorance, some fear, and ever so much else has woven it and worked on it. That mountain there! That cloud there! What is "real" in that? Subtract the phantasm and every human ingredient from it, you sober ones! If you can! If you can forget your descent, your past, your training—all of your humanity and animality. There is no "reality" for us—not for you either, you sober ones [...] (GS 57).

Nietzsche's claim, here, is that the "realist" is simply a kind of "artist," her "reality" the product of a "fantasy," her "sobriety" a form of "drunkenness," her "objectivity," "reason," and "knowledge" a form of "passion," "prejudice," "unreason," and "ignorance." This is more than simply a gratuitous attack on "realism," "science," and "objectivity." As with so much in Nietzsche, the rhetoric of this passage is motivated by an important insight that issues from his thoroughgoing naturalism. "Realism" is attacked only for deluding itself with phony ideals and for denying its actual cognitive and instinctual operations. It is attacked only for wanting "to see the world as it really is," stripped of every interpretation<sup>122</sup> and of the background of "descent," "past," and "training" that is the condition of seeing anything *as* anything at all. Put in the affirmative, Nietzsche's point is simply that all "finding" is "creating," that all "science" is "art," insofar

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<sup>122</sup> See GM III 24 on the perniciousness of this attempt to avoid all interpretation.

as science, too, necessarily involves "interpretation," a notion generally consigned to the realm of the aesthetic (which itself has been traditionally subordinated to the scientific because of its preoccupation with "appearances" and "styles," its conscious "fabrication," and its lack of concern with "truth").<sup>123</sup>

Even the *notion* of "reality" and the *desire* to "lay it bare," Nietzsche argues, are the products of interpretation—more specifically, of an anti-naturalistic interpretation based upon the central belief that there is another, better world which contains indubitable facts, certainties, and foundations. Thus, later in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes:

The truthful man, in the audacious and ultimate sense presupposed by faith in science, *thereby affirms another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as he affirms this "other world," does this not mean that he has to deny its antithesis, this world, *our world?* (GS 344).

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<sup>123</sup> It is this primacy of interpretation that leads Nietzsche to argue for the primacy of art over science. This idea is found throughout Nietzsche's work, from *The Birth of Tragedy* and "On Truth and Lies" (see, especially, section 2) to the *Genealogy of Morals*. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche writes: "Art—to say it in advance, for I shall one day return to this subject at greater length—art, in which precisely the *lie* is sanctified and the *will to deception* has a good conscience, is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than is science: this was instinctively sensed by Plato, the greatest enemy of art Europe has yet produced. Plato versus Homer: that is the complete, the genuine antagonism—there the sincerest advocate of the 'beyond,' the great slanderer of life; here the instinctive deifier, the *golden nature*" (GM III 25). In a passage that resonates in more than a few ways with Nietzsche's point that, for the naturalist, science involves art and artifice, Quine writes: "Physical objects are conceptually imported into [the prediction of future experience] as convenient intermediaries—not by definition in terms of experience, but simply as irreducible posits comparable, epistemologically, to the gods of Homer. For my part I do, qua lay physicist, believe in physical objects and not in Homer's gods; and I consider it a scientific error to do otherwise. But in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits. The myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience" (1951, 44). This is precisely the way that, in "On Truth and Lies," Nietzsche describes the "man of science," who differs from "the man of art" only insofar as his world-interpretation is primarily directed toward utility for survival. See OTL, 88-91. For a more recent statement of the position that science is art by other means, see Goodman (1976, 242-64) and (1978, 102, 106-7, 139-40). This idea is more fully discussed above in 1.6.

This view is restated in another important passage from the *Genealogy*, in which Nietzsche argues that modern science [*Wissenschaft*] is still ascetic insofar as it preserves an unconditional faith in truth. Referring to *die Wissenschaftler*, he writes:

It is precisely in their faith in truth that they are more rigid and unconditional than anyone [...]: that venerable philosopher's abstinence to which such a faith commits one; that intellectual stoicism which ultimately refuses not only to affirm but also to deny; that *desire* to halt before the factual, the *factum brutum*; that fatalism of "*petits faits*" (*ce petit faitalisme*, as I call it) through which French science [*französische Wissenschaft*; read: positivism] nowadays tries to establish a sort of moral superiority over German science; that general renunciation of interpretation [*Interpretation*] (of forcing, adjusting, abbreviating, omitting, padding, inventing, falsifying, and whatever else is of the *essence* of interpreting)—all this expresses, broadly speaking, as much ascetic virtue as any denial of sensuality [...] (GM III 24)

The point of all these passages is clearly that there are “things” and “facts” only within the framework of an interpretation; and that, without interpretation—i.e., without some system that makes ontological commitments and accords its terms meaning and value—there are no “facts” or “things” at all.<sup>124</sup>

#### 4.4.6 *The Finitude and Infinitude of Interpretation: Nietzsche's Anti-Essentialism*

Nietzsche's ontological theory, then, presumes neither a pre-given world of unknowable becoming nor a pre-given world of ordinary objects. On the contrary, against all realisms, Nietzsche holds that every ontology is the construction of an interpretation, and that no world would remain over after the subtraction of all interpretation.

Given this reading of Nietzsche's ontological theory, we can see how the neo-Kantian accounts misconstrue the doctrine of perspectivism on another important point as well. According to those accounts, perspectivism is motivated by the richness of the world and

<sup>124</sup> Cf. BGE 34: “if, with the virtuous enthusiasm and clumsiness of some philosophers, one wanted to abolish the ‘apparent world’ altogether—well, supposing you could do that, at least nothing would be left of your ‘truth’ either.” On “facts” and “interpretations,” in addition to the passages cited above, see WP 481, 556; on the fabrication of “thinghood,” see GS 110 and WP Book Three, Section I, *passim*.

the poverty of human knowledge: the SNK account argues that we are cut off *de jure* from any comprehension of the actual world of becoming; the ASNK account argues that, while our knowledge is not inherently limited in this way, it nonetheless *de facto* falls short of its goal. In the first case, the world we know is but a poor selection, simplification, and reification of the chaotic world of becoming; in the second case, the world has myriad features as yet unglimped by us. In both cases, the world is always much more than what we perceive or know of it.

We have already seen the contradictions and difficulties involved in the skeptical view that Nietzsche's ultimate ontology is an unknowable world of becoming. The anti-skeptical view, however, seems more plausible. On the optical analogy, it seems obvious that, since one's field of vision is limited, one can never know precisely, at any given time, what is happening or has happened outside of it. Perspectivism seems to make just this point concerning the finitude of human knowledge. Thus, for example, Jean Granier writes:

The idea of the fundamental perspectivism of knowledge has as its precise function the uprooting of the metaphysical conviction that subjectivity is capable of dominating the totality of Being [...] The epistemological subject is necessarily situated, his field of knowledge is finite; thus no one perspective can exhaust the richness of reality (1966b, 190).

Alan Schrift concurs:

Nietzsche puts forward the doctrine of perspectivism as an "empirical" conclusion regarding human finitude: because human beings are situated bodily at a particular point in space, time, and history, their capacity for knowledge is inevitably limited. Being so situated, human beings are not capable of the "objective," "disinterested," observation of "reality" demanded by the traditional account of knowledge. Rather, there are only evaluations made from a particular perspective (1990, 146).

Arguing that truth is not independent of our cognitive interests but is independent of our cognitive capacities, Maudemarie Clark writes:

There are always more truths than any human being can know. We are, after all, finite creatures with a limited amount of time to discover truths, whereas there are surely an infinite number of truths to discover (1990, 135).

Finally, Brian Leiter writes that, according to Nietzsche's perspectival view of knowledge:

We will never exhaust all possible perspectives on the object of knowledge [...] we do indeed have knowledge of the world, though it is never disinterested, never complete, and can always benefit from additional non-distorting perspectives (1994, 345-46).

Relying on the optical analogy, all these accounts presume a passive conception of knowledge, an essentialist conception of ontology, and a correspondence theory of truth. That is, they conceive of knowledge as prompted by, and directed toward, a representation of the richness of an antecedent reality. Knowing is modeled on the accumulation of successive visual representations of a static object. Though total comprehension is always only an ideal for finite creatures like ourselves, it nonetheless serves as a heuristic ideal.

Thus, speaking of the world as a text, Granier writes:

The rules of philology require that we sacrifice interest and utility for the demands of a textual understanding, one that would restore, to the extent to which it is possible, the original meaning of the text. The text is not a plaything of human subjectivity [...] Here we must set out to discover this primordial ground, upon which every interpretation grows. For the noblest and most courageous spirits, one voice speaks louder than that of their own vital interests, commanding us to do justice to nature, to reveal things as they are in their own being (1966b, 199).

Similarly, Schrift writes that perspectival pluralism is motivated by a fidelity to the pluridimensional world:

The doctrine of perspectivism is directed in part toward restoring the stimulating enigma and ambiguity of existence. The world holds no single, univocal truth, and our cognitive methods should reflect that situation [...] In calling for a plurality of interpretations, this approach does "justice" to the pluridimensionality and plurivocality of [...] the world (1990, 155, 188).<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Cf. Morgan: "if reality is a flux of relations, knowledge must be a flux of relativities, and can never hope to fathom or exhaust the nature of things"; "Knowledge is perspectival because reality is" (1941, 254, 261); Schacht: "our multiply perspectival access to things and the world then turns out to accord with their fundamental character, and to be a condition of the possibility of—and a means of arriving at—a relatively comprehensive interpretation of them that would do something approaching justice to them" (1983, 101).

Clark, too, conceives of perspectival knowledge in this manner. On her view, perspectivism satisfies "the minimal correspondence theory of truth," according to which "our beliefs are about an independently existing world" and "they can be true only if they correspond to it, that is, get it 'the way it is'" (1990, 39). And, following Clark's lead, Leiter holds that perspectival knowledge seeks correspondence with the external world. On his account, "the Perspectivist Thesis (Proper)" has it that:

Knowledge of objects in any particular case is always conditioned by particular interpretive interests that direct the knower to corresponding features of the object of knowledge [...] If they are not to distort the real (but non-transcendent) nature of objects, however, these particular interests must be adequate to relevant respects of the "terrible truth" about reality (1994, 351).

While perhaps plausible *prima facie*, this construal of Nietzsche's perspectivism is rendered problematic by the account of this doctrine for which I have argued above. I have contended that perspectivism is poorly conceived as developing an optical analogy and best regarded as functioning within a generalized conception of interpretation. Thus, Nietzsche regards all entities as interpretive constructs situated within a complex field of interpretations, each of which constantly attempts to extend its range and power through the addition, subtraction, and/or reworking of interpretations (or parts of interpretations) already on hand.

Given this notion of perspectival interpretation, the optical analogy fails, as does its thematic of finitude. It makes no sense to say that the world outside of our finite perspectives and interpretations is "infinitely rich," since, for Nietzsche the world is something only within the field of perspectival interpretation. "In itself" the world is nothing and has no essence, since "'essence,' the 'essential nature' is something perspectival" (WP 556). Perspectivism, then, cannot be motivated by the desire to "do justice" to this world or "get it the way it is," since no such world remains over. Interpretation is not conceived as an attempt at fidelity to the "primary text of the world,"

but as the reinterpretation of a previously existing interpretation, the elaboration of a new system in which the terms and functions of a previous system are “reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected” (GM II 12).

Even on this anti-dualist rendering of Nietzsche’s perspectivism, however, there is still some sense in which interpretations are finite and the world infinite. Yet the reasons for this are precisely the opposite of those appealed to by the neo-Kantian accounts. Alluding to Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida provides a nice formulation of the different conceptions of finitude under consideration here. He writes:

There are two ways of conceiving the limit of totalization [...] Totalization can be judged in the classical style: one then refers to the empirical endeavor of either a subject or a finite discourse in a vain and breathless quest of an infinite richness which it can never master. There is too much, more than one can say. But nontotalization can also be determined in another way: no longer from the standpoint of a concept of finitude as relegation to the empirical, but from the standpoint of the concept of *play*. If totalization no longer has any meaning, it is not because the infiniteness of the field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but because the nature of the field [...] excludes totalization. This field is in effect that of *play*, that is to say, a field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field, as in the classical hypothesis, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions (1966, 289).<sup>126</sup>

The first of these “two ways of conceiving the limit of totalization” summarizes the notion of finitude assumed by the neo-Kantian accounts of perspectivism. On this view, perspectivism describes “the empirical endeavor of either a subject or a finite discourse in a vain and breathless quest of an infinite richness which it can never master.” Such a view presupposes the existence of a pre-given world that remains forever outside of every

<sup>126</sup> Note that the Bass translation inadvertently omits the words “discourse in a vain and breathless quest of an infinite.” The distinction between these two conceptions of “nontotalization” is also discussed by Nelson Goodman, who attempts to sort out the difference between the claims of “the mystic” and those of “the ontological relativist” or “pluralist.” While both parties seem to agree that no description can ever be faithful to the world as it is, the former maintains that this is because the essence of the world is too great and ineffable for us to grasp, while the latter maintains that this is because the world is nothing in itself, since the world is something only insofar as it is construed by one of the many incompatible, true descriptions of it. See Goodman (1960).

perspectival grasp, and dreams of an omniscient being who could encompass this infinite richness. But this is not Nietzsche's view. Nietzsche's perspectivism is captured in the second formulation, according to which the world is infinite and untotalizable "not because the richness of the field cannot be covered by a finite glance or a finite discourse, but [...] because, instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions." Translating this into Nietzsche's idiom, we can say that, for Nietzsche, the world is infinite precisely because it *lacks* an essence, since essence is perspectival and perspectives are always contested, engaged in a perpetual struggle that witnesses the incessant substitution of interpretations for one another. For Nietzsche, there are "infinite interpretations" (GS 374)—and therefore worlds—precisely because there is no World and no supernatural judge that could settle the struggle once and for all.

Recalling Nietzsche's description of this struggle in the *Genealogy of Morals* (II 12), Michel Foucault writes:

If interpretation can never be brought to an end, it is simply because there is nothing to interpret. There is nothing absolutely primary to interpret, because at bottom everything is already interpretation. [...] There is never, if you will, an *interpretandum* which is not already an *interpretans*, so that there is established in interpretation a relation of violence as much as of elucidation. In fact, interpretation does not illuminate an interpretive topic that would offer itself passively to it; it can only violently seize an interpretation already there, which it must reverse, return, shatter with blows of a hammer (1964, 64).

Along with Derrida's, this formulation suggests that Nietzsche's world of ubiquitous interpretation is one of becoming and will to power, and that these doctrines do not name some primary essence or *interpretandum*, but simply present different ways of describing the struggle of interpretation itself. Thus, the doctrine of "becoming" holds that there is being only according to an interpretation, and that one interpretation always passes over into another, forming a "continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations"

(GM II 12). Thus, "will to power," too, names this incessant process of substitution—victorious new interpretations "becoming master" over previous and existing interpretations (GM II 12) and maintaining their hegemony only by subduing rebellious forces from within and encroachments from without.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

Read in this way, there is neither contradiction nor dualism in Nietzsche's later philosophy. The doctrine of perspectivism does not conflict with the doctrines of becoming and will to power, nor does it support a distinction between "what appears" and "what is." Rather, Nietzsche's later philosophy describes a world that is interpreted and interpreting throughout, in which nothing—not the knowing subject, the World, the thing in itself, becoming, or will to power—escapes the field of interpretation. Moreover, for Nietzsche, this world of interpretation is required by the naturalism to which "the death of God" commits us; for only such a world remains once we have vanquished all the "shadows of God" and banished from our philosophy the ideals of "true being" and "disinterested knowledge."

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## I. Nietzsche's Works

## A. English Editions

I have largely relied upon the Kaufmann and Hollingdale translations of Nietzsche's works, which are cited according to the standard abbreviations of their English translations followed by the book number (where appropriate) and section number. The only exceptions are "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," which is cited by page number from the Breazeale edition and translation, and *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, which is cited (by section number) from the Cowan translation. I have occasionally modified these translations, however, and assume the final responsibility for their rendering from German into English. When quoting Nietzsche, I have indicated my ellipses by placing them in brackets; ellipses that are not bracketed are Nietzsche's.

Abbreviations of the texts, followed by their original dates of publication or completion, and the translations consulted, are as follows:

- A      *The Antichrist* (1888). In *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann, 569–656. New York: The Viking Press, 1968.
- AOM     *Assorted Opinions and Maxims* (1879). Volume II, Part 1 of *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, 209–99. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- BGE     *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886). In *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann, 192–435. New York: The Modern Library, 1966.
- BT      *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). In *Basic Writings*, 17–144.
- BT/SC    "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" (1886). In *Basic Writings*, 17–27.
- D      *Daybreak* (1881), trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- EH      *Ecce Homo* (1888). In *Basic Writings*, 655–791.
- GM      *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887). In *Basic Writings*, 451–599. (Roman numerals indicate essay number.)
- GS      *The Gay Science* (Books I–IV: 1882; Book V: 1887), trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.
- HAH     *Human, All too Human*, Vol. I (1878), trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- HC      "Homer's Contest" (1872). In *The Portable Nietzsche*, 32–9.

- OTL "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" (1873). In *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale, 79–91. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1979.
- PTG *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873), trans. Marianne Cowan. Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1962.
- II *Twilight of the Idols* (1888). In *The Portable Nietzsche*, 465–563. (Roman numerals indicate chapter number.)
- WP *The Will to Power* (1883–88), ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.
- Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–85). In *The Portable Nietzsche*, 103–439. (Roman numerals indicate book number; arabic numerals indicate section number.)

### B. German Editions

English translations have been checked against the now standard Colli-Montinari edition of Nietzsche's *Werke*. Among other benefits, this edition finally standardizes the emphases in the *Nachlaß*; and I have accordingly altered the emphases in the English translations. (This work has been greatly facilitated by a helpful concordance, prepared by Marie-Louise Haase and Jörg Salaquarda [1980], between the various German editions of *Der Wille zur Macht* and the Colli-Montinari edition.) References to the Colli-Montinari edition are indicated with this abbreviation, followed by the volume, page and fragment numbers:

- KSA Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Berlin/New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1967–88.

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The dates that follow the name(s) of the author(s) or editor(s) indicate the original date of publication or, in the case of papers or lectures unaltered in their published form, the date of delivery. When the version consulted is a reprint or translation of the book or article, the date of the reprint is given after the name of the publisher.

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